DISTANT COMPANIONS

MNEMOSYNE

BIBLIOTHECA CLASSICA BATAVA

COLLEGERUNT

J.M. BREMER · L.F. JANSSEN · H. PINKSTER

H.W. PLEKET · C.J. RUIJGH · P.H. SCHRIJVERS

BIBLIOTHECAE FASCICULOS EDENDOS CURAVIT

C.J. RUIJGH, KLASSIEK SEMINARIUM, OUDE TURFMARKT 129, AMSTERDAM

SUPPLEMENTUM CENTESIMUM OCTOGESIMUM QUINTUM

C.M.J. SICKING

DISTANT COMPANIONS

DISTANT COMPANIONS

SELECTED PAPERS

BY

C.M.J. SICKING

BRILL
LEIDEN · BOSTON · KÖLN
1998

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Sicking, C. M. J.
Distant companions : selected papers / C.M.J. Sicking.
p. cm. — (Supplements to Mnemosyne, ISSN 0169-8958 ; v. 185)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 9004110542 (cloth : alk. paper)
1. Greek philosophy. I. Title. II. Series: Mnemosyne, bibliotheca classica Batava. Supplementum ; 185.
PA27.S56 1998
880.9—dc21 98-20024
CIP

Die Deutsche Bibliothek – CIP-Einheitsaufnahme

[Mnemosyne / Supplementum]
Mnemosyne : bibliotheca classica Batava. Supplementum. – Leiden ; Boston ; Köln : Brill
Früher Schriftenreihe
Teilw. u.d.T.: Mnemosyne / Supplements
Reihe Supplementum zu: Mnemosyne
185. Sicking, Christiaan M. J.: Distant companions. – 1998

Sicking, Christiaan M. J.:
Distant companions : selected papers / [C. M. J. Sicking]. – Leiden ; Boston ; Köln : Brill, 1998
(Mnemosyne : Supplementum ; 185)
ISBN 90-04-11054-2

ISSN 0169-8958
ISBN 90 04 11054 2

© Copyright 1998 by Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, The Netherlands

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission from the publisher.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use is granted by Brill provided that the appropriate fees are paid directly to The Copyright Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910 Danvers MA 01923, USA. Fees are subject to change.

PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

CONTENTS

Preface vii
Introduction 1

Archaic Poetry

Solon On Wealth 7
Pindar's First *Olympian* 19

Tragedy

Oedipus and Tiresias 29
Aristotle and Sophocles' *Electra* 38
Admetus' Case 48
Jason's Case 63

Comedy

Aristophanes Laetus? 77

Poetics

Pre-platonic, Platonic and Aristotelian Poetics of Imitation 85
Plutarch's Literary Theory: a Philosopher's Alibi for Teaching Literature 101

Historiography

Pericles' Funeral Oration and Last Speech as Political Documents 114
Aristotle and Herodotus: *τὰ γενόμενα* or *οἷα ἂν γένοιτο*? 147
Lucian, Cicero and Historiography 158

Philosophy

Homo or Philosophus Mensura? 168
Plato's *Protagoras*: A 'Battle of Wits'? 183

History of Classical Scholarship

The Classicists' Nostalgia 209
Cobet 245

Bibliographical References 259
Index Locorum 265

PAPERS TRANSLATED AND/OR REVISED FOR THIS VOLUME

Solon's "Muzenhymne"
Lampas 17 (1984) 290-300

Pindar's First Olympian: an Interpretation
Mnemosyne Series IV, 36 (1983) 60-70

Oedipus en Teiresias
Lampas 8 (1975) 2-9

Aristoteles en de *Electra* van Sophocles
Lampas 26 (1993) 38-48

Euripides' *Alkestis*
Lampas 2 (1969) 322-341

Het gelijk van Jason
Lampas 22 (1989) 283-295

Aristophanes Laetus?
ΚΩΜΩΙΔΟΤΡΑΓΗΜΑΤΑ. *Studia Aristophanea Viri aristophanei W.J.W. Koster in Honorem.* Amsterdam 1967, 115-124

Voor-platoonse, platoonse en aristotelische Poetica
Lampas 16 (1983) 177-191

Plutarchus, *De audiendis poetis*: literatuurtheorie als excuus voor literatuuronderwijs
Lampas 16 (1983) 205-226

Aristoteles en Herodotus: de historicus als literator?
Lampas 16 (1983) 192-204

Lucianus, Cicero en de theorie van de geschiedschrijving
Lampas 19 (1986) 199-207

The General Purport of Pericles' Funeral Oration and Last Speech
Hermes 123 (1995) 404-424

Classici(sten)
Lampas 11 (1978) 162-185

Cobet
Een universiteit herleeft, ed. W. Otterspeer. Leiden 1984, 26-37

PREFACE

With the exception of the papers on Plato and Protagoras, all papers collected in this volume are, to some extent, rewrites of earlier publications.[1] The majority of them were originally intended for a readership of classical teachers in the Netherlands. They were published in *Lampas*, a journal for Dutch classicists, which, in 1968, was founded by A.D. Leeman, H. Wallinga and myself, almost immediately after a 'Committee for the Modernization of the Classical Languages Curriculum' (*Commissie Modernisering Leerplan Klassieke Talen*) had presented to the Dutch Minister of Education a report on the objectives of teaching Latin and Greek. As a chairman of this committee I was acutely conscious that the report was the starting signal of a difficult process of adapting the content and practice of teaching the so-called *humaniora* to the rather drastic changes the Dutch system of secondary education was undergoing at the time. So I sought to support the teachers in their demanding task of keeping their subject alive in a difficult period – that has been going on ever since, and recently entered a new stage. I tried to do so by offering them interpretations of Greek texts that were (and in some cases still are) part of the Greek reading programme, or by discussing subjects I thought that could be of interest to those who found themselves in the front line.

At the time, I tried, of course, to take into account what others had written on the subjects in question, but deliberately refrained from flooding my readers with the full apparatus of bibliographic references – on the supposition that this might have a demoralizing rather than a motivating effect, if only because the heavy workload that goes with being a teacher today would leave them no time to look them up anyway. I did, however, try to argue as carefully and explicitly as I could from the Greek texts in their original form, so as to enable my readers to decide for themselves whether they were prepared to share my views.

I have considered using the opportunity of the papers being translated into English for providing the reader with the footnotes that

[1] In all cases, the present version is to replace the earlier one. For a list of the original versions see p. VI.

would enable him[2] to identify those to whom I owe a debt, either because I agreed with them and tacitly incorporated their results in my argument, or, in the case of those I disagreed with, because their writings helped me to find my own way. Doing so, however, would have obliged me to take into account and to discuss the more recent literature also – which, for sheer lack of time, would have frustrated what is the primary intention of this volume: making available to a non-Dutch readership a number of earlier publications that were written in the course of ca. thirty years. So I decided just to exclude those papers I found to have become outdated and/or whose most important function was to inform the non-specialist reader rather than to offer something new, and to leave those papers I hope that will still be of interest more or less as they were. I did, however, use the opportunity for incidentally improving on, or just clarifying, my argument. So the English text I have printed is either a more or less literal translation or a more or less drastic reworking of my original Dutch text.

I have included two papers that were published earlier in scholarly reviews. The paper on Pindar's first *Olympian* is a slightly modified version of the English text that was printed earlier in *Mnemosyne*; the one on Pericles' Funeral Oration and Last Speech is a both corrected and enlarged version of its *Hermes* predecessor. Finally, the papers on 'Homo Mensura' and on Plato's *Protagoras* have been written especially for this volume. Since I am currently preparing a full monograph on Protagoras as a philosopher in his own right, I would gratefully welcome any critical reactions which may help me in dealing with a subject that is as frayed with difficulties as, in my view, it is promising.

This volume appears at the moment I am about to retire from the Leiden chair of Greek language and literature. It would never have appeared but for the gentle pressure of Jan van Ophuijsen, Marlein van Raalte and Peter Stork, whom I am both proud and happy to call my friends and colleagues. I have considered suppressing their identity, because, by disclosing it, I risk making them co-responsible for my finally having decided to overcome my hesitation and to act upon their suggestion that such an undertaking would indeed be worthwhile – a decision only I myself am answerable for. I owe a special debt to

---

[2] The semantic contrast between 'he' : 'she', 'him' : 'her' &c. being, technically speaking, a binary contrast, 'he', 'him' &c. refer to both women and men, unless the context makes it clear that the referent is a male.

Marlein van Raalte: when I told her that I had some difficulty in finding a title that would bring out the common denominator of this collection of, at first sight, rather disparate papers, she almost spontaneously said "Why not *Distant Companions*?" – thereby testifying to an affinity for what has 'made me tick' in devoting my energy to the study of Greek language and literature, that makes one feel very grateful indeed.

Finally, I have to thank Corry Donner, who corrected my English and carefully translated the *Lampas* papers, patiently putting up with my constantly using her translations as a kind of draught version of the final product, instead of revising my text *before* asking her to translate it, as, of course, I should have done. So there is every reason to conclude this *Preface* with the commonplace *caveat* that I alone am responsible for the text in its present form – hoping that those whose privilege it is that the *lingua franca* of today happens to be their mother tongue will turn a blind eye to the lack of polish and variety of my English style (or should I say phraseology?), rather than attributing it to even more serious shortcomings.

Leiden, February 1998
C.M.J.S.

INTRODUCTION

> Tradition is the democracy of the dead. It means giving votes to that remotest and obscurest of classes, our ancestors. It refuses to submit to the arrogant oligarchy of those who simply happen to be walking around.
>
> (G.K. Chesterton)
>
> Quandoque ista gens suas litteras dabit, omnia corrumpet. (Cato Maior)
>
> Les grecs n'enveniment rien. (Albert Camus)

In order to understand the present state of classical studies, one has to remember that the awareness of the study of classical antiquity being essentially a *historical* discipline first developed as the by-product of the wish to vindicate the prestige of the classical authors against the claims of the so-called 'moderns' – who considered contemporary civilization superior to what their ancestors had seen as the perfect and unattainable models for all times. It was in order to safeguard Homer from modern contempt that, for instance, Anne Dacier advocated judging his work by the standards of his own time and society – thus consciously adding a historical dimension to the appreciation of Homeric poetry.

It seems to me that classical scholarship up to the present day has not succeeded in freeing itself from the concerns of those who watched and welcomed the first beginnings of its flourishing period. It may seem, at first sight, that we are entitled to look down, for instance, on Antoine Houdar de la Motte's 1713 "translation" of the *Iliad* as an irresponsible attempt to adapt a 'primitive' Homer to the taste of the age of *Louis le Grand*. But his removing from the *Iliad* what he considered superfluous and rearranging the remainder into twelve books of neat alexandrines, is, perhaps, not all that different from arguing, as Wilamowitz did, that Homer's original *Iliad* must have ended with the death of Achilles, because that would result in a finale he considered more satisfactory than the one we find in our text.

In short, the impressive results of classical scholarship should not make us blind to the fact that many scholars who contributed to them were (and still are) motivated by the wish to enhance the prestige and continuing relevance of the authors they are studying – and in the process to stress their own merit as creative readers and indispensable mediators.

So one may ask oneself whether, from a purely scientific point of view, the drawbacks of standing in a long and in many respects distinguished tradition do not, perhaps, outweigh its positive effects. Classicists see it as their duty to prove the lasting significance of the ancient authors, rightly claiming that it is worthwhile to read Homer, Sophocles *e tutti quanti* because, apart from the intrinsic value of what they have written, getting to know them can help us to understand the tradition we stand in as well as ourselves. This makes many interpreters inclined to make the authors say what their modern readership (or the interpreter himself) wants to hear from them, or to make them 'anticipate' later developments by foisting upon them ideas they themselves could not even begin to imagine – instead of sticking to the exacting task of removing the difficulties we have in understanding messages that, after all, were never meant to be heard by us. The history of the interpretation of the classics is, to put it in Gadamer's terms, a history of the 'application' of the texts almost as much as of the advancement of their understanding – some classicists tending to behave like clergymen whose wish to increase the number of churchgoers makes them prone to the temptation of ramming home the vital significance of the Bible at the cost of tampering with or even playing down the less palatable aspects of the message they are to preach. Yet, the 'exegesis' – or the application – of a sacred text for the benefit of believers is, or at least should be, something fundamentally different from responsibly explaining and interpreting the texts from a period that belongs to the past.

In recent years, the cultural environment in which the classicist has to find himself a 'niche' has become particularly threatening to the standards of the profession, especially in the United States, where the so-called 'literary canon' is discussed in a way that is more like a battle than anything that can be seen in previous periods. Let me quote L. Lindsay's review (*BHR* 59, 1997, 116-7) of John Guillory's *Cultural Capital: The Problems of Literary Canon Formation* (Un. of Chicago Press 1995): "What it all comes down to is a combination of a search for identity and sheer greed: each group wants to be represented in the canon because that 'validates' it (as the modern jargon goes) and, more importantly in the fierce struggle of politics in this age of 'entitlements', everyone wants not just a slice of the pie but more than they deserve, to win the battle to get the most credits or 'goodies' (...) All this involves some fierce infighting and sabotage, guerilla tactics, terrorism, and all other ungentlemanly aspects of modern war, which

is war in which the badly equipped undertake to defeat the over-equipped by fighting in ways that the Big Boys do not understand or perhaps are hindered from adopting (this must be rare) by some standards of correct behaviour and traditional rules of combat."

It will be clear that, even if we allow for a considerable degree of exaggeration, this situation brings the classicist – who is, after all, the representative *par excellence* of Dead European White Males – in a difficult position, in which he easily may find himself becoming less and less particular about the standards to be kept up, and bringing into action any weapons that will beat his competitors at their own game. It would seem that some recent contributions to the interpretation of Homer are a case in point. In order to make my point, a short digression is necessary.

As far as I can see, it cannot reasonably be doubted that (1) the overall design or 'macrostructure' of the *Odyssey* as we have it is best understood as the work of an (unknown) single author; (2) our text of the *Odyssey* owes much (a) to the professional reciters who preserved the poem for several generations, and (b) to the person(s) who made the standard text which is the ultimate written source of our text today. In the period between the creation of the *Odyssey* and its finally being laid down in writing the separate recitation of episodes that, for one reason or another, had become popular, will have been the rule rather than the exception. The rhapsodes involved will have been inclined to adapt the content of these episodes both to the requirements of part-recitation and to the taste of their audience. If we take it – as I believe we must – that, during this period, the 'text' of the poem was still the spoken rather than the written word, we will have to reckon with the possibility – to say the least – that, if 'Homer' saw his poem today, he would not be surprised to find that it has undergone many smaller and greater additions and alterations. He probably would regard these as "accidents natural to his profession: had not he himself dealt as he wished with the work of earlier poets?" (Page 1955, 159); he would have applauded some of them as improvements on his own version, and have condemned others as disruptions of the general purpose and even the consistency of the *Odyssey* as he himself left it to his successors.

If this description is more or less correct, we will have to reconcile ourselves with its consequences: our text of the *Odyssey* is the product of a complicated process, and it is an illusory hope that we will be able either to reconstruct Homer's *Odyssey* (which, for that matter, will have

been different every time he recited it) or to assign to each and every part of our text the precise contribution it has to make to one single consistent artistic design: we will have to accept that the *Odyssey* will remain for ever "irreducible to a single, straightforward, one-dimensional reading."

The part of the preceding sentence that is marked as a quotation has been taken from S.L. Schein's editorial Introduction to *Reading the Odyssey* (31). There, however, it concludes an argument whose purpose it is to convince the reader that "it would be naive to equate Agamemnon's (and other male characters') interpretation of Penelope's virtue and of the proper relations between husbands and wives with the interpretation of the *Odyssey* itself or its implied author or readers." (Schein 28)[1] "The poem (...) tempts its audience to accept as its own the judgements of various male characters, including Odysseus, about Penelope. According to these judgements, her glory lies in loyalty to her husband and *oikos* and in the resourcefulness with which she expresses this loyalty. But the poem also shows a Penelope with a mind of her own, rather than one merely in harmony with her husband's. It would be simplistic to adopt the standard, patriarchal reading of Penelope, and of the role of women in the *Odyssey* generally, without recognizing how the poem partly undoes this reading." (Schein 30)

The point I want to make is twofold:

(1) In the passage quoted, the *text* of the *Odyssey* as we have it is equated with an entity that is termed 'the poem' – the latter being, as it were, hypostatized as the bearer of an "open-ended, interpretively ambivalent and indeterminate" (Schein 31) reading that will save it from the reproach of embodying a form of male chauvinism that reduces the role and importance of women to serving their husband and his *oikos*;

(2) in order to justify an 'open-ended' reading of the *Odyssey* (a) the reader is advised to distrust what the *dramatis personae* have to say whenever they can be suspected [by the modern reader, that is to say] of having an axe to grind ("Why, however, should we accept Odysseus' reading of the situation, which *obviously* (my italics) is self-serving?" (Schein 29); (b) the very inconsistencies that result from the fact that a number of alterations that have been made to Homer's

[1] For the bibliography of recent interpretations of Penelope see Rutherford 1996, 80, note 56.

Odyssey reflect the tastes, norms and values of several generations of rhapsodes are used to make the '*poem itself*' imply "that its own main values and most frequently expressed viewpoints are neither unproblematic nor the only ones possible." (*ib.* 30-1)

What Schein, in the jargon of the day, terms (with Bakthin) the "unfinalizability" of the *Odyssey* apparently even makes him prefer the *Odyssey* above the *Iliad*, which, as he has it (31), "although it too suggests a critique of the social system and values it appears to celebrate, is simpler and more straightforward in its action, its characterization, and the clarity of the tragic contradictions in which its characters live and die." This comes close to confessing that it may prove difficult to keep the *Iliad* on the reading list because of its very resistance to the kind of 'multi-dimensional' reading that will save it from saying what its modern readers do not want to hear: "More fundamentally, especially in the case of Penelope, the *Odyssey* is a kind of epic poetry that leaves itself open to re-vision and re-creation by audiences and readers, whom it challenges to achieve interpretive clarity in the face of formal, narrative, and ethical complexities and uncertainties." (Schein 31)

I see no possibility to avoid the sad conclusion that this kind of 'interpretive' behaviour plays havoc with the results of many generations of scholars' work on the historical interpretation of Homeric epics, and I find myself very much in sympathy with Bernard Williams, who recently stressed that precisely because the Greeks indisputably are among our cultural ancestors, it is all-important that, when we try to recover their thoughts and beliefs, we keep a keen sense of their otherness. By making the Greeks anticipate, confirm or imply what we feel and believe ourselves, we run the risk of throwing away in the process both the possibility to understand them correctly and the relevance such an understanding may have to our own ideas, values and practices. "In these relations there is (...) a two-way street between past and present: if we can liberate the Greeks from patronising misunderstandings of them, then that same process may help to free us of misunderstandings of ourselves." (Williams 11) One can, after all, very well support the views of, let us say, Lady Pankhurst and her followers, who added lustre to their rallies by chanting some passages from Murray's translation of Euripides' *Medea*, and at the same time stick to one's conviction as a scholar that the tragedy was not meant to be read as a feminist manifesto. In doing so, we will remember that those among Euripides' male audience who likewise confused

the *dramatis personae* with the author of the tragedy, blamed Euripides for stirring up hate against women rather than for undermining male prerogatives.

This is, of course, very different from a post-modern attitude to literature, or from the views of Heidegger and Gadamer, who have it that instead of trying to overcome our prejudices we rather should welcome them as the best means of preserving the vitality of our inheritance and our tradition. It is, however, not the classicist's task to wring from – or to impose on – the *Iliad* or the *Antigone* some meaning that is significant in terms of the reader's own historical situation, but to help the modern reader in the difficult process of breaking away from his own historicity in order to construe and understand the historical meaning of the text he wants to read. Only then can the reader try and see for himself whether the text has something to offer he still considers to be worthwhile and significant. If, however, classical scholarship allows itself to accept that "the *real meaning* (my italics) of a text as it addresses itself to an interpreter is always codetermined by the historical situation of the interpreter,"[2] it will in the end take away the ground from under its own feet, interfering between the author and the reader rather than mediating between them and helping the author to speak for himself. As one of Auden's favourite quotations has it: "Tradition is the democracy of the dead. It means giving votes to that remotest and obscurest of classes, our ancestors. It refuses to submit to the arrogant oligarchy of those who simply happen to be walking around." (G.K. Chesterton)

[2] Quoted from Hirsch's summing up of Gadamer's position (253).

SOLON ON WEALTH

1. If we disregard, for the moment, minor differences in nuance, the interpretations that have been given of Solon's so-called 'Hymn to the Muses' (13 W.) can be divided into three main types.

1.1. One regards the poem as a chain of thoughts and considerations in which each link is understandable in its own place, but in which the poet was guided less by the wish to achieve a goal he set himself in advance than by the associations each subsequent idea evoked in him. Those who read the poem in this way[1] do not regard it as an organic whole: the grouping and order of the parts have not been determined by their function within the whole, and the size of the parts is not necessarily proportionate to the relevance they have for achieving an intended overall objective.

If the poem shows an associative-linear rather than a functional-hierarchical order, this, of course, does not imply that the poet could follow any association at any moment. Interpretations of this type do indeed assume that there is a *Leitmotiv*, a dominant theme with which the subsequent thought-units that together constitute the poem show a more or less remote relationship. It will be obvious that the formula chosen to describe such a *Leitmotiv* can only be fairly abstract, such as 'the difference between the ways of the gods and of man' or 'man's longing for wealth'.[2]

1.2. Others try to save the poem as a closed, more or less organic composition by reconstructing a sequence of thought, which lies hidden in the poem, as it were, but does not explicitly come to the surface. A good example of this type of interpretation is A.W. Allen's (1949) reading of the 'Hymn' as a prayer for wisdom addressed to the Muses. Human failure is caused by ἄτη, that is sent by Zeus as punishment for injustice (9-32) or, in a more general sense, results from man's lack of proper insight, inflated ego and vain optimism (32-70). The last six lines are considered to be a kind of summary: people do not know their limits and are therefore liable to be struck by ἄτη. The underlying idea that makes for coherence is that man will be

[1] See, for instance, Lattimore 1947.

[2] See Wilamowitz 1913, 257ff.

subject to misfortune if the Muses do not grant him the wisdom the entire poem prays for.

1.3. An entirely different kind of interpretation has been advocated by Van Groningen (1958, 94ff.). In his opinion, there are several different idea-complexes Solon wants to deal with simultaneously, that are in his mind at the same time as it were. In this view, the leading theme of the poem is 'wealth and its inherent problems'. Related to this are four "idées maîtresses" (*a–d*) that are mutually related. The observation (*a*) that the poet longs for good fortune and wealth is specified in a moral sense by the consideration (*b*) that only wealth that has been rightfully obtained with the consent of the gods is permanent. (*c*) Man's inclination to be both ambitious and short-sighted is at odds with this consideration, and this has fatal results because (*d*) fate always threatens to sanction. Together, these ideas form a "réseau entrelacé": they are present throughout the poem in varying combinations – albeit that a couple of passages apparently do not fit in.[3] Thus the impression of free improvisation the poem leaves is deceptive: "le procédé compositionnel est le résultat naturel d'un état d'âme dans lequel la passion ou la conviction sont tellement fortes qu'elles ne se soumettent pas au contrôle ni à la direction d'une pensée ordonnée."

2. However mutually different these three types of interpretation are, they have a number of things in common.

2.1. First, they all use ideas and/or sequences of thought that have been abstracted from the poem, and work, as it were, under the surface of the text as ordering principles that make for coherence. Allen, for instance, assumes there is an argument that in itself is clear and consistent, the crux of which, however, cannot be found in the text. Van Groningen works in a similar way: his "idées maîtresses" together form a line of thought that does not come to the surface.

The explanation of the discrepancy between what is assumed to have been the poet's intention and the form he gave to his poem varies with the type of interpretation advocated. Those who follow Allen tend to assume that Solon was not (or, being an author from the 'archaic' period, was not yet) able to give what he wanted to say an adequate form. Van Groningen finds an explanation in the passionate conviction of the poet which prevents him from ordering the

---

[3] Lines 3b-6 and 69-70 are assumed to originate with "l'amour archaique grec pour les antithèses"; 14-15 are said to be "une note additionelle."

"idées maitresses" in a way that matches their inherent logic: the poet feels that he has to deal with everything simultaneously, and it is the interpreter's task to lay bare the hidden consistency.

Even those who have it that Solon's audience was supposed just to follow the poet's associations, cannot do without extracting from the text a theme or guideline which limits the freedom of association. This type of interpretation, however, differs from the others in that interpreters seem less inclined to doubt the poet's ability to give his *propositum* an appropriate form; they thus more or less avoid the kind of modern arrogance that is particularly clear in Wilamowitz' introduction to his interpretation of the poem, which seems to put the scholar in the position of a schoolmaster who has to correct a clumsy paper by a talented pupil: "Es kommt darauf an, Gedanken, die in verschiedenem Verhältnis stehen, *richtig* (my italics) zu verbinden, während Solon sie einfach coördiniert hat." The need for this follows from the observation "daß die Fähigkeit zu denken der Ausdrucksfähigkeit so weit voraus ist."[4]

2.2. Another common feature of the types of interpretation mentioned is that they seem to neglect a number of formal characteristics of the text. Those who take the poem as a series of reflections on the difference between the ways of the gods and of men, or as a prayer for wisdom addressed to the Muses, neglect, for instance, the fact that Solon starts from his longing for wealth (7), and returns to it at the end of the poem (71 ff.): in his longing for wealth man is insatiable. The poem shows a kind of ring composition: the desire for wealth is given a restriction at the beginning of the poem: the poet desires wealth (*χρήματα*) but not to win it by injustice (*ἀδίκως*) since this will result in 'infatuation', 'blindness' (*ἄτη*, 7-8). This pattern is repeated at the end: the gods have granted to mortals the pursuit of profit (*κέρδεα*), but Zeus may send *ἄτη*. An interpretation that does not expressly take into account these characteristics of beginning and end can hardly be correct.

2.3. Furthermore, it is to be noted that the interpretations referred to fail to take into account that the concept of *τέλος* – or, in a slightly broader sense, the contrast between present behaviour and its final results in the future – has an important, or even a dominant role in the poem. *Δίκη* comes *ὕστερον* (8), *ἄτη* is small and inconspicuous at

[4] Cf. the negative verdict of Knox (1985, 148): "the structure is loose and the sequence of thought muddy; the style is careless."

first, but painful in the end (15); Zeus controls the τέλος of everything (17); nothing is kept hidden from Zeus indefinitely (27); in the end (ἐς τέλος) crime will always come to light, albeit that some will pay their dues now, others later, still others not until the next generation (26 ff.); at the beginning no one knows what the end will be (65–6).

3. It should then be examined whether the poem allows an interpretation which describes its content in terms that have been derived from the poem itself, and whether formal indications could be useful in this process. Such a reading will also have to confront what is, perhaps, the main obstacle to a coherent interpretation: how to unite in one and the same context statements that are hardly compatible, such as: "wealth that has been rightfully obtained is a permanent possession" (9-10) next to "no one knows how things will end" (65-6) and – even more difficult – "ἄτη randomly strikes one person now, then another" (75-6) next to "ἄτη will occur sooner or later if one's obtaining wealth was accompanied by injustice." (12 ff.)

The following paraphrase of the poem is an attempt to discover the line of thought in which these statements, that are so difficult to reconcile, will fit.

1-6: Solon' argument is preceded by a separate *proemium* of six lines that is addressed to the Muses, and reminds us of the so-called Homeric hymns.[5] In it, Solon asks to be granted prosperity (ὄλβος) by the gods, which will go together with a good reputation with all people.[6] He expresses the hope that, as a result of this (5: ὧδε), he will be 'sweet' (γλυκύς) to, and earn the respect of, his 'kith and kin', his φίλοι, and bitter and terrifying to his enemies. The words ὄλβος πρὸς θεῶν μακάρων (3) anticipate the idea with which the line of thought of the poem proper will start in verse 7.

7-15: In 7-8, Solon expresses his desire for wealth (χρήματα), which, however, he does not want to obtain ἀδίκως, because in that case retaliatory action will certainly (πάντως) follow. The contrast contained in this statement is repeated and further developed in lines 9-16. Wealth

[5] This *proemium* stands apart from the poem as such, which only starts at verse 7. It is, therefore, misleading to refer to the text as a 'Hymn to the Muses'.

[6] In view of the way Solon has expressed himself, part of the issue seems to be that wealth given to a man by the gods – unlike wealth obtained without their consent – goes hand in hand with a good reputation with *all* (enjambment) people. For the role of δόξα cf. Theognis 145-8, discussed in Section 6.2 below.

(πλοῦτος) granted by the gods is a secure and permanent possession, and is in contrast with wealth pursued[7] by means of ὕβρις (i.e. of breaking the rule of δίκη): the latter is contrary to good order and unwillingly follows wrongful actions. It will soon be accompanied by ἄτη, like fire, hardly noticeable at first, but ultimately disastrous: the result of ὕβρις will not be permanent for human beings (16).

This elaboration is framed, as it were: the contrast it departs from is returned to in 16 and 17 – which also form the transition to the next part: next to the fact that the results of human ὕβρις only last a short while, there is the certainty that, in the end, Zeus will control everything.

In lines 9-16, a secondary contrast between gods (9) and man (11) plays a part, and the simple observation (wealth that is obtained contrary to δίκη results in ἄτη) made at the beginning, in practice, appears to be more complicated: ἄτη is indeed the instrument for re-establishing δίκη, but we are easily misled by the fact that, sometimes, this does not become manifest until later.

16-32: The contrast between man and the gods partly determines the form of the transition from 16 to 17, where the next segment of the poem starts. The beginning of this passage is in contrast with the ending of the previous one: opposite the short time the results of ὕβρις last, is the certainty that Zeus knows the end of everything, and will make corrections where needed – suddenly, like a spring storm clearing the sky. Zeus' wrath will not materialize immediately, like that of mortals, but no one can escape it indefinitely; in the end it will certainly come, albeit sooner for some than for others, and even, for some, not until the next generation. But come it will.

The whole passage can be regarded as a renewed and more specific development of the initial thought: those who obtain wealth ἀδίκως will certainly be punished later. Δίκη comes in the shape of a repayment (τίσις) demanded by Zeus. The observation that ἄτη as an instrument of δίκη is hardly noticeable at first (15) is further explored: Zeus has time on his side; the τίσις sent by him will manifest itself suddenly and unexpectedly, and in some cases so late that people are allowed to believe they escaped it. A rudimentary form of this idea can be found in what was stated in lines 6-7 (πάντως ὕστερον ἦλθε δίκη), particularly in the tension between the certainty expressed by πάντως and the time lag that is implicit in ὕστερον – a tension that

[7] Reading Ahrens' conjecture μετίωσι for the corrupt τιμῶσι in 11.

reaches full maturity in πάντως ἐς τέλος, ὕστερον, πάντως αὖτις and ἐξοπίσω.[8]

33-62: The contrast between man and the gods, which played a role from line 9 onwards (9: θεοί compared to 11: ἄνδρες), and which was sharpened in the transition from 16 to 17, now becomes more important. The idea that Zeus, unlike mortals, watches over the τέλος, and ultimately always will restore the order of δίκη (17 ff.), in 33-36, is contrasted with the vain optimism of mortals,[9] both the good and the bad among them. In verses 37-62, this motif is extensively elaborated upon.

This elaboration is twofold. In lines 37-42, three examples of definite hope for improvement are mentioned (the sick make themselves believe that they will be well one day; δειλοί can see themselves becoming ἀγαθοί in the future; those who look less attractive hope they will one day be beautiful) as reference material for the poor who feel they will surely be rich one day.

In 43-62, the perspective is broadened. The central motif is the adage "everyone pursues his own goals" (σπεύδει δ' ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος), which is illustrated by a series of six examples of the human tendency to commit oneself to the goals one has in mind. Only in the first example (that of the tradesman) is this effort motivated by the wish to make profit (44, κέρδος). The perspective farm workers, craftsmen, poets, seers and doctors have been placed in is not so much the effort they make (σπεύδει) as the variety (ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος) of their activities. In the last two examples, the focus of attention shifts to the complete lack of control over results: the seer cannot prevent fate from definitely occurring, and the doctor has no control over the outcome of his treatment: what appears not to be a serious ailment may prove fatal, while an ailment that looks serious may all of a sudden be cured. The words πάντως and ἐς τέλος – that, earlier on, referred to the certainty that Zeus will restore order – now emphasize the false certainty of people who vainly try to escape misfortune.

63-70: From line 63 on, the main contrast with the naivety of human optimism is no longer the power of the gods, who see to it that

---

[8] When translating ἐξοπίσω by 'in the future' one should not forget that the image of the future that goes with the Greek word is that of something that lies 'behind one's back' – which seems to add considerably to the feeling of uncertainty about what the future will be like.

[9] In 4, 9 and 11 the poem speaks of 'humans' (ἄνδρες), in 16, 26 and 33 of 'mortals' (θνητοί) – the term which distinguishes them from the gods.

the final result will be in harmony with δίκη (28-32). The conclusion to be drawn from the series of examples is that, in spite of human effort, in the last instance, it is Moira who distributes good and bad: no man can escape what the gods have in store for him. No one knows at the beginning what the outcome will be.

In other words: the idea that the gods as the guardians of δίκη will always have the last word (9-32), via the contrasting theme (33-36) that people in their naivety remain optimistic until experience teaches them better (*πρίν τι παθεῖν*) and the elaboration of the latter, by means of the examples of the adage *σπεύδει δ' ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος*, leads to the statement that the outcome of *everything* is uncertain – a statement which is in a different and further-reaching contrast with man's optimism and multifarious pursuit than the certainty of an ultimate δίκη, which was the starting point of the argument.

From 67 on, the idea, expressed in 65-6, that no one can ever be certain about how things will end, is put in a moral perspective. Those who try to do the right thing will unexpectedly be struck by misfortune, while those who do the wrong thing may find good fortune, and thus be spared the results of their foolishness. What, in 65-66, appears to be almost complete uncertainty and arbitrariness, may perhaps still hide a certain order. In spite of well-intended attempts, one can still be overcome by ἄτη, and the good fortune of the bad may indeed reflect the intention of the gods. This leaves us very far removed from the more straightforward confidence, expressed earlier, that malefactors can at best temporarily escape repayment because the gods take their time.

71-76: In 71, with *πλούτου δέ*, the poet finally returns (this time, significantly, in a transition without contrast) to the topic of the pursuit of wealth that was his starting point, but does so in a version that has been modified by the foregoing considerations: there is no limit to man's pursuit of wealth, those who have a lot will strive to double it; no one can satisfy all. This last statement may, perhaps, be taken to imply that man's pursuit of wealth could *always* lead to ἀδικία: when all human beings strive for unlimited wealth, there will almost automatically be a lack of balance, since there will always be someone who 'is short of wealth'.

Viewed in this light, Solon's final statement (74-76) appears to be the conclusion to his argument: profit (*κέρδεα*) is granted to mortals by the gods. Profit leads to ἄτη, and if Zeus sends it by way of repayment (*τεισομένην*), it will strike one today, the other tomorrow (*ἄλλοτε ἄλλος*

ἔχει). The belief that being struck by ἄτη is to be seen as Zeus' way of exacting τίσις has indeed been saved, but as opposed to what Solon said before he started his development of the σπεύδει ἄλλοθεν ἄλλος-motif, he now says that ἄτη may strike *all*.

4. The point of this paraphrase is to bring out that the implications of the theme that constitutes the start of the poem in lines 7-8, change in the course of Solon's argument, and that the stages in which this happens can be precisely perceived and described. Two things stand out:

(a) ὕστερον in line 8 is as it were the seed from which the uncertainty that increases in the course of the poem develops: if someone enriches himself ἀδίκως, the balance will not be restored until later. This idea is initially developed in a way that leaves intact the causal relation between ἀδικία and the restoration of δίκη: those who do wrong may be prosperous for a while, since the gods are at liberty to retaliate in their own time. The further development of this observation leads to a break in the direct relationship between injustice and redressed justice: children will suffer the consequences of what their parents did, even though, from a human point of view, they are not responsible. It seems to be *this* possibility that so powerfully evokes the idea of vain human optimism: if the gods sometimes strike the innocent, the gap between their way of controlling the τέλος and human illusions is considerably widened, even to the point of making the hope that one can avoid disaster by acting in accordance with δίκη go up in smoke.

By going into detail on the subject of human illusions, Solon makes the direct relation between cause and consequence, between injustice and the restoration of balance, even more questionable than it was – until, finally, all that remains is the impression of more or less complete arbitrariness. As appears from 67 ff., it is Solon's belief that this arbitrariness is still to be seen as the manifestation of divine control. Those who act in accordance with δίκη may be at fault without being aware of it; those who act unjustly may be delivered from their ἀφροσύνη, and – last but not least – man's pursuit of wealth is so insatiable that the very capability to make profit, granted by the gods, inevitably turns human beings into competitors, so that, apparently, ἄτη may strike anyone. The quasi-random distribution of ἄτη does not prevent the poet from sticking to the belief that there is a relation between ἄτη and τίσις, up to and including his final conclusion (75-6).

(b) The way in which Solon's argument is developed can be characterized by H. Fränkel's (1962, 594) term *Pendelschlag*, although I would not agree with his analysis (1960, 70-1) of the poem, which has it that "Eine große Wahrheit soll in ihrer Einen, gültigen Gestalt von zwei oder drei Seiten her recht gründlich gezeigt werden." The theme of wrongfully obtaining wealth leading to retaliation is developed both more extensively and differently each time that human behaviour is contrasted with the policy of the gods – to such an extent that the final and concluding version of it only barely compares with the first one. Whereas another author would perhaps have modified his premises by means of a straightforward argument, Solon's way of reasoning may be characterized as a kind of dialectics, reconsidering and deepening the initial idea time and again, and contrasting it with its opposite until finally, the initial belief, which, at the time, may have seemed a truism, has been shown to be much less obvious and more problematic than it seemed to be.

The central contrast from which the *Pendelschlag* derives its energy as it were, is that between divine and human thinking and steering. Opposite wealth granted by the gods is profit pursued by man; what man obtains ἀδίκως only lasts a short while: Zeus watches over the outcome of everything; opposite his schedule and final control is the vain optimism of mortals. The concluding lines present the central contrast in a very lapidary form: all of the tension that has been explored in the poem comes out of the fact that the gods are the ones who grant wealth to human beings: Zeus has the last word, however arbitrary the outcome may appear to humans.

4.1. It will be clear that this interpretation rules out any possibility to regard the poem as an organic composition in the strict sense, or as a *réseau entrelacé*. Nor is it a series of purely associatively connected considerations, at least not to the extent that the sequence of thought would have no consistent or purposeful direction.

The poem is then the consistent development of the implications of the idea it starts with. The links that constitute the argument are neither exchangeable nor dispensable,[10] the size of the parts seems largely in line with the effort it takes to think through what is being said and to accept the consequences. It is the discernable harmony

[10] Cf. Wilamowitz 1913, 265: "Die Elegie vermag ihre Gedanken noch nicht anders vorzutragen als daß sie wie die Glieder einer Kette auch ineinander passen, wenn dies oder jenes von ihnen entfernt wird."

between form and content which forbids us to regard Solon as an author who, when he starts to speak, does not know where he will, or wants to end. On the contrary: what makes the poem impressive is the very purposiveness with which the author carefully examines the observations that may run counter to the belief that justice is rewarding and injustice is not, to finally conclude that one, perhaps, can and should maintain that belief, but that it hardly increases the transparency of the distribution of good fortune and misfortune. The confident statement with which Solon started his poem is both modified by and enriched with the results of an unprejudiced observation of human behaviour – the price to be paid being a substantial part of the initial transparency and certainty.

So, in this poem, in one go, Solon goes from the naive theodicy of those who regarded secure wealth as a sign of preference of the gods, to a point that comes close to the belief Sophocles expressed at the end of the *Trachiniae*: οὐδὲν τούτων ὅ τι μὴ Ζεύς.

5. A correct understanding of Solon's poem will be enhanced if we realize that it was written at a time when trade and the enlargement of capital by way of interest were still regarded as dubious ways of obtaining wealth. The usual translations of δίκη, τίσις (justice, retaliation, punishment) and ἀδικία (injustice) wrongly suggest that the 'injustice' Solon is referring to consists in enriching oneself by disregarding the difference between mine and thine. In times, however, in which most economic dealings were still paid for in kind, 'making money' (χρήματα) *as such* will have been open to criticism for acting contrary to δίκη. An abundant harvest is, after all, much easier ascribed to the favour of the gods than the accumulation of capital, which, in bad times, provides the owner with disproportionate power over those who owe him interest and repayment, and which, by taking big risks and speculating, he could either enlarge or lose altogether. If the latter happens, it will easily strengthen the feeling that, in the last instance, owning a large amount of money disturbs the balance, the δίκη of nature: it suggests an independence from the vicissitudes of life which no human can attain and thus easily tempts people into taking unjustified risks.

Against this background, the χρήματα δ' ἱμείρω μὲν ἔχειν with which the poem starts could even sound slightly provocative. Unlike others who are more conservative, Solon certainly longs to obtain the kind of wealth that can be gained in business or trade, but he realizes that

it is difficult to do so in a way that is exempt from the odium of disturbing the balance the gods are guarding. 'Balance' and 'balanced distribution' approximate the content of the term δίκη in this context better than 'justice', the implication being that those who obtain wealth ἀδίκως will be made to restore the balance by paying back (τίσις). The idea that τίσις is sometimes not realized until a later generation is more easily understood if we take it that Solon refers to an excess of (inherited) capital that is 'paid back' rather than to 'punishment' by means of illness or other forms of misfortune.

6. Our appreciation of Solon's dialectical argument may be enhanced when we compare his poem with a couple of texts from the *corpus Theognideum*. It is to be noted that, in Theognis, each passage formulates just one possible answer, which the author apparently found satisfactory at the time, to the question that also concerned Solon.[11]

6.1. In Theognis 197-208, there is a direct and clear connection between the stability of wealth and the way in which it is obtained – a connection that may go unnoticed because the balance that has been disturbed by wrongfully obtained wealth is sometimes not restored by the gods until much later. This line of thought is closely similar to that of the first part of Solon's poem.

6.2. Theognis 585-590 are largely identical with Solon's lines 65-70. But the paradox presented by Solon -- those who want to do the right thing may fall to ruin, those who act wrongfully may gain good fortune – has been eliminated. Theognis' idea seems to be that the distribution of good fortune and misfortune is only incomprehensible at first sight. When we look more closely we will find that apprehension about a good reputation (δόξα) does not suffice. Those who leave it at that will be overcome by ἄτη; only those who act justly will be rewarded by the gods and will be protected against the consequences of human ignorance. The effect of replacing Solon's εὖ ἔρδειν by εὐδοκιμεῖν, and his κακῶς ἔρδοντι by καλῶς ἔρδοντι is that the orderly world of the *petit moraliste* is substituted for the problematic state of affairs observed by Solon.[12]

6.3. Theognis 145-148 express a conviction that must have been considerably more controversial in the archaic period than can be

[11] Cf. Huijing & Van Raalte 1981, who offer a full treatment of the Theognis-passages discussed here.

[12] Cf. Van Groningen 1966, 235.

easily understood by us. "Better to be poor and just than rich and bad" and "true *ἀρετή* is justice, *ἀγαθός* is he who is *δίκαιος*." What happens here is that the term *ἀρετή* is given an ethical connotation of a type it did not have before. The *ἀγαθός* is no longer the man whose value to society may be measured by his wealth. In the situation presupposed by Theognis' words, any 'upstart' can acquire wealth by successfully doing business, and therefore the distinction between *ἀγαθοί* and others has to be redefined. Now, the veritable *ἀγαθοί* are said to be those who keep to the time-honoured norms and values, even if their superiority no longer manifests itself in their being wealthier than others. The emphasis with which it is said that justice corresponds with the *total* of *ἀρετή*, and that *every* man who is *δίκαιος*, is also *ἀγαθός*, reveals that it is the author's intention to completely exclude the *nouveaux riches* from the elite as he defines it.

Together, the three Theognis texts add relief to Solon's poem. Solon refuses to simplify, and attempts to do justice to the actual complexity of life, which so often fails to satisfy man's sense of justice, or only satisfies it after thorough contemplation. Maybe he was also inspired by the insight of the businessman who knows that just keeping to the adage 'better poor and respectable than rich and disreputable' does not produce wealth, and, in the economic situation Solon found himself in, may have an immobilizing effect.

PINDAR'S FIRST *OLYMPIAN*

1. In a summary discussion of Pindar's first *Olympian*, D.C. Young (1968, 121-3) presents an analysis of the poem, the purpose of which is to demonstrate that its construction is strictly symmetrical. A nucleus of 12 lines (53-64: Tantalus honoured by the Gods, his misdeed and punishment, introduced and followed by a "transitional gnome") is preceded by a first Pelops myth (25-53) and followed by a second (65-94), each of about 28 lines. The poem begins and ends with passages of approximately 24 lines (1-24 and 95-118) dealing with the Olympic games, Hieron, his victory, and the poet's role as the recorder of victory.

To make my point, there is no need to treat the question whether the lines 95-118 mirror in every detail lines 1-24, as Young claims they do: "*A*: superlatives, *a*: ὕμνος ἀμφιβάλλεται, *B*: general praise of Hieron, *b*: Δωρίαν φόρμιγγα, *C*: (Hieron's) Olympic victory, *c*: λάμπει δέ οἱ κλέος" opp. "c^1: τὸ δὲ κλέος δέδορκε, C^1: Olympic victory (general), b^1: Αἰοληΐδι μολπᾷ, B^1: general praise of Hieron, a^1: Μοῖσα τρέφει βέλος, A^1: superlatives (specific)." Apart from the details, it is undeniable (1) that both passages deal with the Games, the victory, the victor and the poet, and (2) that the poet uses Hieron's κλέος, which shines in the ἀποικία of Pelops, to move from the opening passage to the first myth, and ends the second myth with the mention of Pelops' κλέος radiating (δέδορκε) from afar in Olympia.

It is equally undeniable that the section between lines 24 and 95 is in the form of a triptych: first Pelops myth – Tantalus myth – second Pelops myth. Reduced to the simplest form possible, the symmetrical construction of the poem appears as follows:

A	(1-24)	Olympia, Hieron, his victory, the poet;
B^1	(25-53)	Pelops abducted by Poseidon;
B^2	(53-64)	Tantalus;
B^3	(65-94)	Pelops defeats Oenomaus;
A^1	(95-end)	as in A.

The transition from B^3 to A^1 does indeed reflect exactly that from A to B^1; even the same words are used. It is also notable that a gnome occurs both between B^1 and B^2 and between B^2 and B^3.

The question of the function of such a construction is answered by Young as follows:

(1) the symmetry as such is aesthetically satisfying;

(2) "the emphasis on superlativity" at the beginning and end accentuates the interest "of the very idea of superlativity" with regard to "the heroic act" (of Pelops?), the Olympic games, and Hieron's position in the world;

(3) "the balanced expressions about the shining of κλέος, the one pertaining to Hieron, the other to Pelops, tend to clarify the paradigmatic relationship of Pelops' Olympic success to Hieron's victory";

(4) "the structural isolation of the Tantalus-myth, and its removal from all contexts directly associated with Hieron elucidate its function as a foil for the subjects with which the poem is elsewhere concerned, esp. for example, Hieron's way of life."

This calls for comment.

Re (1) It is doubtful whether, and if so, how it is possible to discern symmetry in the case of a text, where it cannot be perceived at a single glance as it can be in the case of a painting whose composition is symmetrical. It is evident that Pindar's audience can only realize *afterwards*, i.e. during and after hearing A^1 and B^3, that A and A^1, and B^1 and B^3 are of equal length. This also presupposes that the demarcation lines between the symmetrically composed sections are recognisable *as such* to the audience; that, for example, B^1 is almost of exactly the same length as B^3, will only be apparent to them, when they are aware of the fact that the poem is divided into sections, and this awareness can only grow *while* they are listening, or rather at the point at which one section is followed by the next. If the audience is ignorant of this fact, they will merely notice that the poet again turns his attention to Pelops in B^3.

Re (2) "Superlativity" is an abstract based on the presence of superlatives and superlative expressions. That superlative expressions accentuate the superlative character of the person or thing to which they are applied is a tautology; the fact that they occur more frequently at the beginning and at the end than elsewhere in the poem is due to the subjects dealt with. Young's observation, therefore, amounts to no more than the statement that greater attention is paid to Hieron and his victory at the beginning and end of the poem.

Re (3) Κλέος of both Hieron and Pelops does indeed constitute the transition to and from the central mythical section. But I do not see how this parallel could "clarify" the paradigmatic relationship of Pe-

lops' victory to that of Hieron unless what is meant is that the position of κλέος suggests that there *is* such a relationship. But this reveals nothing about its nature (wherein lies the analogy?).

Re (4) Young apparently means to say that the symmetrical position of two passages on Olympic victories together with the fact that the first pertains to Hieron's victory, the second to Olympic victories in general (*if* that is so), suggests the applicability of what Pindar says about victories as such to Hieron's victory. That would imply that the expectation expressed in 97ff. applies equally to Hieron – an idea far too obvious (and one that is expressed all too clearly in the text) to be emphasized in the way presumed by Young – even if we assume for the moment that the audience's brain functioned in the way required.

Re (5) Should one wonder how the Tantalus-myth referred to in 55 to 63 could act as a 'foil' for Hieron's way of life, the only possible answer would be that Hieron would risk incurring κόρος by his ἄτη as Tantalus had done, calling down the gods' punishment on his own head. As is well-known, warning against overconfidence is virtually a platitude in Pindar. Expressed so openly and moreover in the 'central' position it occupies in the poem, this warning would have to be assumed to be exceptionally relevant in Hieron's case. Why this would be so is not clear and the assumption is nowhere confirmed in the rest of the poem.

Taking all in all, it cannot be said that Young has succeeded in presenting a convincing case for the function and meaning of the symmetrical structure of the poem. The fundamental significance of the Tantalus passage in particular for the whole poem would have to be much more clear and explicit if we are to accept that the poem's symmetrical construction is essential to the expression of the author's intentions.

Moreover, Young's analysis and interpretation imply a kind of organic composition which is far from typical of the poet as we know him. It would be most unusual if the position and length of the sections of the poem were to correspond directly and unambiguously to their significance for the poem as a whole. Insofar as it is possible to generalize at all about the construction of Pindaric epinikia, they appear to show the marks of a rather different style of composition, a characteristic of which is that there is no evident need to make the position and length of the sections correspond to their function and relevance for the whole.

2. If we stop looking at the poem 'panoramically' and, as it were, from above, and instead follow the train of thought closely, we shall discover the state of affairs that usually obtains in Pindar. Some illustrative passages will clarify this.

In lines 24 to 53 the cardinal fact is given in a few words directly at the beginning: (the founder of Olympia was) *Pelops with whom Poseidon fell in love.* Due attention is then paid to the circumstances surrounding this event:

26-27 it happened when Clotho raised him from the cauldron with a new ivory shoulder;
28-34 but many lies are told, made plausible by embellishments; only time reveals the truth;
35-36 it is wisest for man not to speak evil of the gods;
37-45 no, Pelops, it was at a banquet given by your father that Poseidon abducted you and took you to Olympus on golden horses (as Zeus later did with Ganymede);
46-51 when you could not be found, jealous neighbours claimed that your father had served you to his friends;
52-57 but I shall not call the gods cannibals; that would bring misfortune.

Thus of the ca. 30 lines two (24-25) mention the fact itself, and seven (37-45) give the 'true story'. Apart from the comparison with Ganymede, the rest is devoted to the false version of the events (26-27), to the question how people can believe it (28-34), to the question how it arose (46-51), and to two gnomes (35-36, 52-53).

The second Pelops myth runs parallel to the first. Here the central fact appears to be that Pelops defeated Oenomaus with the four-horsed chariot; the honour he was accorded in Olympia was after all due to *this* success. Before we learn this (88; the lines 80-93 describe the consequences of this deed for Olympia), we have heard that Pelops wished to marry Hippodamia (67-71; the early age at which she desired the marriage is given relatively great emphasis and is expressed in rather conventional terms and images), that he prayed to Poseidon to help him (71-85: his special relationship to Poseidon; Oenomaus' remarkable behaviour; Pelops' heroic tendency to court risks), and that the god gave him a chariot and horses.

The poet's comparatively detailed account of the events leading up to Pelops' victory, in themselves of secondary importance, may indicate that, like in the first Pelops myth, here too Pindar is presenting

an unconventional version of the story – although there is no certainty that the version in which Myrtilus acts as Pelops' aid was the usual one.[1] If this were so, Pelops' position as Poseidon's favourite would be Pindar's own invention, which would raise the question of his motives for deviating from the conventional version of the myth with regard *both* to Pelops' disappearance and the circumstances of his victory over Oenomaus.

A second notable fact is that at the beginning and end of the sections dealt with in the foregoing analysis, there are no indications in the text that should hint at the transition from one passage to another. Viewed in a purely formal light, there is nothing in lines 24-25, 53-54, 64-65 and 94-95 that indicates a text boundary or a fresh start in the train of thought. In 24-25 the transition from Hieron's fame to Pelops is made in a single sentence, which at the same time mentions the cardinal fact in relation to Pelops *in a relative clause.*[2] In both 54-55 and 64-65 it may well be claimed that it is the gnomes that divide sections B^1 and B^3 from B^2, but on the other hand this is contradicted by the fact that there are gnomes in other parts of the poem that have no such function (27 ff., 30-31, 81, 99-100). Nor is there anything in 94-95 that could indicate a compository caesura. Not only is there a continuous flow of the train of thought at points where the composition of the poem passes from one of Young's sections to the next, but the text also seems to suggest a fresh start at other points that have no significance for the symmetrical structure of the whole. This is the case in lines 17 (ἀλλὰ Δωρίαν ..,) and 37 (υἱὲ Ταντάλου...).

Together, these observations suggest that the symmetry recognized by Young is very probably not functional in the sense that the poet's intention was either to have indicated thus the relative importance of the various sections or to have drawn attention to certain parallels significant for his interpretation of Hieron's victory. The form of the text is such that it would appear to disguise the seams of the composition rather than to accentuate them.

---

[1] The figure on the Olympic temple sculptures assumed to be Myrtilus cannot be identified with any degree of certainty; there are no mythographical data extant that go back far enough.

[2] Although Pindar is known often to move from one subject to another by means of a relative pronoun (cf. *Pyth.* VIII.18 as one example among many), completely comparable relative pronouns likewise occur where there is no change of subject: cf. in this poem v. 8 (ὅθεν), 12 (ὅς), 12 (τόν).

3. In view of this situation, it may be worth-while to endeavour to discover how the mythical material in the poem may be relevant to Hieron and his victory, quite apart from the composition as such. To put it more concretely: what have

(1) Poseidon's preference for Pelops (presented emphatically as an alternative version of an old story in which Tantalus offers his son as a repast for the gods),
(2) Pelops' victory over Oenomaus with Poseidon's support, and finally
(3) Tantalus' punishment for his misdeed (now given a motive that makes his action more comprehensible)

to do with Hieron's Olympic victory in 476 BC? It would seem to me that the glimmerings of an answer to these questions can be found in the famous priamel with which the poem begins.

The priamel is almost always read in such a way that *first* Olympia is praised as being superior to anything at all comparable, *then*, quite separately, Hieron, whose victory in Olympia is worthy of a eulogy.

It is well-known that Pindar and numerous other lyric poets generally tend to leave so-called 'causal' connections implicit rather than to give them an explicit expression. If, however, we specify the connection made by ὅθεν in verse 8, the statement that the Olympic games inspire the poet to praise Zeus in a song in honour of Hieron, may well be the reason for Olympia's superiority. To summarize: "There are no games superior to those of Olympia, as they afford an occasion for a song in honour of Zeus and Hieron." This would be in accordance with the close relationship created between Hieron and Zeus, accentuated as it is by both the connotation of the epithet μάκαιρα (11) and by the terms in which Hieron's kingship is described, which recall the Homeric διοτρεφὴς βασιλεύς.

If this reading of the first strophe and antistrophe is accepted, it suggests an answer to two of the three questions put above. The whole poem becomes more meaningful when it is presumed that Pindar wished his audience to draw two analogies: one between Pelops' relation to Poseidon and Hieron's relation to Zeus, and one between Pelops' relation to Olympia and Hieron's relation to Olympia. To put it more explicitly: just as Pelops became the founder of *Olympia's fame*, thanks to his position as *Poseidon*'s favourite and through his *victory* over Oenomaus with the four-horsed chariot, so also will Hieron, with the special support of *Zeus* – of which his *victory* with the race-horse Phere-

nicus is the proof – make a substantial contribution to the *fame of Olympia*, of which the anticipated victory in the chariot-race would be the reward.

An interpretation along these lines would seem to lend significance to a number of details in the poem:

(1) The priamel at the beginning is brought into a meaningful relationship with the subsequent text it introduces.

(2) The correspondence of Hieron's κλέος in Pelops' ἀποικία in 23-24 to Pelops' κλέος that shines in the Olympic competitions is given a specific meaning.

(3) The supposition explains why Pindar is so eager to accentuate the 'real' reason for Pelops' disappearance during Tantalus' repast for the gods and why he ascribes the conventional version of the story to φθονεροί.

(4) It also explains why Pindar emphasizes Poseidon's support of his beloved Pelops in his contest against Oenomaus, possibly by sacrificing the role of Myrtilus as handed down by tradition. An analogy may also be suggested here between Pelops' inclination for heroic deeds (v. 81 ff.) and Hieron's desire to achieve a victory of equal éclat.

(5) Somewhat contrary to his custom, Pindar scarcely warns Hieron of the risks of self-conceit to which every successful person is exposed. In fact he goes so far as to offer Hieron the prospect of an even more spectacular victory in the chariot-race – that owed its prestige to the fact that Pelops' victory over Oenomaus was in the same category. This is also suggested by the very resemblance of μηκέτι πάπταινε πόρσιον (114) to μηκέτι ... σκόπει ἄλλο ... ἄστρον (5-6), which reveals that this victory would have considerable significance for Olympia. In the light of the foregoing, τὸ δ' ἔσχατον κορυφοῦται βασιλεῦσι (114) states in so many words that Hieron's contribution to Olympia's fame can be regarded as perfecting what Pelops has done as the founder of Olympia.

This seems to explain two of the three aspects of the question put above. As far as the third one is concerned: in my interpretation the content of the Tantalus passage is certainly not central to the poem. The passage would appear to have a dual relevance. In the first place, it answers the question of the nature of Tantalus' misdeed now that Pindar has altered the traditional version to such an extent that Tantalus' familiar punishment has lost its meaning. Secondly, the less inhuman offence Pindar imputes to Tantalus offers in its consequences the solution to another problem raised by Pindar's very personal

handling of the myth: if Pelops is taken by Poseidon to Olympus, his earthly existence can only be continued after he has been put back among mortals – and that is, in addition to Tantalus' conventional punishment, precisely the second consequence of his well-meant generosity with nectar and ambrosia which the gods could not tolerate.

Read in this way, the Tantalus passage becomes the link between the two episodes devoted to Pelops and at the same time fills up a gap in Pindar's version of the myth: an innocent Tantalus apparently was too far removed from the conventional Homeric version familiar to Pindar's audience.

This interpretation has of course negative consequences for the function and significance of the poem's symmetrical composition as seen by Young. The symmetry in no way draws attention to what Pindar wished to convey in this poem. On the contrary: the poem displays a linear train of thought and it is precisely the middle section that constitutes a link of minor importance. The symmetrically placed sections B^1 and B^3 together form a consecutive version of those elements of an adapted Pelops story that Pindar wished to use as a vehicle to express his message to Hieron. Finally, sections A and A^1 are more fully understood when the potential climax which the future still has in store for Hieron is read in A^1, after the victory mentioned and praised in A.

For the sake of brevity I shall have recourse to an obsolete form to explain my interpretation in concrete terms. In the light of the foregoing, the *argumentum* of the poem would read as follows:

> The games at Olympia are superior to all others: it is pointless to seek for games more noble than those that are capable of inspiring a poet to proclaim Zeus' fame by visiting his favourite king Hieron in order to praise in song his victory with Pherenikos. Hieron's fame shines in the Olympia of Pelops, the favourite of Poseidon who took him to Olympus. What people relate about him and his father is untrue: after his return to earth – brought about by the humane misdeed of his father who was duly punished – thanks to the favour of Poseidon he defeated Oenomaus, the father of his bride, thus becoming the founder of the Games in Olympia, where his fame has remained visible in horse-racing and boxing. May the favour of the Gods vouchsafed to you today be never be withdrawn from you, Hieron, and ensure you a future victory of as much éclat as that of Pelops. The summit would then be reached and indeed nobody need look for anything higher than Hieron in Olympia, whose praise I hope to sing again on that occasion.

3.1. This unpoetic summary leads, in my opinion, to one more assumption. If we accept the double analogy between Pelops and Hieron – both the favourite of a god, both contributing to Olympia's fame through the help of this god – we can also accept that it may imply that Hieron can be regarded as a 'second founder' of Olympia if he, like Pelops, gains a victory in the chariot-race. When we recall that the work on the new Zeus temple was begun in the seventies of the 5th century and bear in mind that the sculpture representing Pelops' defeat of Oenomaus is among the older sculptures, it is tempting to conclude that Hieron's votive offering as a victor may have consisted of a princely contribution to the costs of ornamenting the temple. That would explain Pindar's remarkable suggestion that Hieron may be regarded as a second founder of Olympia; it would also explain why Pindar failed to include his usual warning to his patron in this poem. We find the only shadow of this kind in verse 99, where the words *ἀέθλων γ' ἕνεκεν* suggest that success in competition does not guarantee success in other sectors of life. Instead, however, of bringing home this point, Pindar opens perspectives of even greater success.

Albeit somewhat hesitantly, I would suggest that there is at least a possibility that the audience was expected to extend the analogy between Pelops and Hieron still further to include a similarity between Pelops, who – a notable detail – was elevated *χρυσέαισι τ' ἀν' ἵπποις* to the heights of Olympus, here referred to as *ὕπατον εὐρυτίμου Διός* (42) and Hieron, whose victory in the four-horsed chariot would make him a second Pelops in the house of Zeus in Olympia.

3.2. In conclusion two remarks of a more general character:

(1) Like so much in Pindar, the tension between the surface (the symmetrical form) and the underlying intention as set out above, would seem to express the poet's tendency to avoid the obvious. The experienced audience of this elitist poetry may be presumed capable of making themselves the connections which, as it were, constitute the in-depth structure on which the poem is built up. The usual sign-posts afford no guidance here. Yet the extent to which the many details that engulf the reader in a continuous stream become meaningful and functional and therefore enlighten, reveals whether the poem has been fully understood. The theory and method of interpretation is thus faced with a difficult task: how to arrive at a testable interpretation on the basis of a text the meaning of which has thus been obscured by

the author – or rather reserved to a specific audience who knew how to decipher the hints they were given?

(2) It would of course be erroneous and meaningless to attempt to write the biographies of Pindar and his patrons with the aid of his poems. Nevertheless, the actual occasions for which the poems were composed could well furnish at least some material for their interpretation. But in that case it is not the methodological problems that ensnare us, but our ignorance. Strictly speaking, we are arguing in circles if we state that the supposition that Hieron was expected to contribute to the costs of building the temple – which is derived from the poem – adds to our understanding of it. But it can be used, in my opinion, because it furnishes a possible reason for Pindar's praising Hieron as the 'second founder' of Olympia, and thus furthers the full interpretation of the poem; such interpretation is, after all, a consistent arrangement of hypotheses relative to the meaning the historical author has assigned to the text. The correctness of these hypotheses cannot be proved. The interpreter can only take consistency and the comprehensiveness of the interpretation as his guides, keeping constantly in mind what we know of the audience for which the poem was intended, the circumstances in which it was written and the convention within the poet worked.[3]

[3] The above interpretation was first presented as a lecture given to students of Leiden University, to whom thanks are due for their constructive criticism. The English translation was made by Mrs. V. van Kretschmar-Fox.

OEDIPUS AND TIRESIAS

From the curious ambivalence which is characteristic of his special brand of enlightened 'neo-classicism', Voltaire, when he was a prisoner in the Bastille, wrote his *Œdipe* with the explicit intention to do a better job than Sophocles – whom he both honoured as a great poet and treated with unmistakable disdain, as a representative of a less enlightened civilization whom he could hope to surpass – exposing in the process the bad taste of the theorists of classicism, who followed Aristotle in seeing in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* the tragedy *par excellence*. When, five years later, *Œdipe* appeared in print, he added, by way of introduction, a number of letters in which he criticized both Sophocles and himself. He felt that the principal mistake of his own play was the choice of its subject, which apparently offered too little material for a complete tragedy. "Régulièrement la pièce d'Œdipe devrait finir au premier acte. Il n'est pas naturel qu'Œdipe ignore comment son prédécesseur est mort."

Voltaire himself had found a way out by attributing Oedipus' not having investigated the matter at the time to his consideration for Iocaste's grief. He tried to expand the possibilities of his *sujet* by introducing Philoctète, a former lover of Iocaste, who could be suspected of having killed Laius – an intervention he later regretted. His criticism of Sophocles' play focuses on the observation that Sophocles, in order to give his play the desired length, had to accept a number of improbabilities: both Oedipus and Iocaste had to be considerably less intelligent than can be made palatable to an enlightened audience. "Tant d'ignorance dans Œdipe et dans Iocaste n'est qu'un artifice grossier du poète, qui, pour donner à sa pièce une juste étendue, fait filer jusqu'au cinquième acte une reconnaissance déjà manifeste au second, et qui viole les règles du sens commun, pour ne point manquer en apparence à celles du théatre."

So, according to Voltaire, there are several points in Sophocles' play where the tragedy should and could have ended. One of these is the Tiresias scene. When Oedipus has summoned Tiresias (Voltaire thought it absurd that the only eyewitness, mentioned by Creon in verse 118, was not called forth immediately), in verse 449 ff., the seer tells him exactly what the situation is. In Voltaire's summary: "C'est vous qui êtes le meurtrier de Laïus. Vous vous croyez fils de Polybe,

roi de Corinthe, vous ne l'êtes point; vous êtes Thébain. La malédiction de votre père et de votre mère vous a autrefois éloigné de cette Thèbe; vous y êtes revenu, vous avez tué votre père, vous avez epousé votre mère." "Tout cela", says Voltaire, "ne ressemble guère à l'ambiguité des oracles: il était difficile de s'expliquer moins obscurément; et si vous joignez aux paroles de Tirésie le reproche qu'un ivrogne a fait autrefois à Œdipe, qu'il n'était pas fils de Polybe, et l'oracle d'Apollon qui lui prédit qu'il tuerait son père et qu'il épouserait sa mère, vous trouverez que la pièce est entièrement finie au commencement de ce second acte."

As with most of Voltaire's criticism of Sophocles, his objections to the Tiresias scene were prompted by his predominant need for "vraisemblance" and his ingrained aversion to "absurdité". What disturbs him is that any spectator who is prepared to use his common sense, would, at several points in the play, be able to draw conclusions that are not drawn by the characters themselves. Therefore, both the plot and the characters failed to convince the *philosophe*, who felt that not using one's common sense is perfectly unnatural.

For Voltaire, the explanation of Sophocles' failure is to be found in the fact that dramatic art in its initial stages simply was unable to achieve the perfection of a Corneille or a Racine. Even Euripides falls short of his standards, though he would have welcomed him as a colleague: Euripides would have been, he says, "le plus grand des poètes s'il était né dans un temps plus éclairé." It would be simplistic to reject this critical attitude towards Sophocles by referring to the excessive self-confidence of the period of 'Les Lumières', which discovered Progress, and paid the price of grossly overrating the possibilities of reason in general, and of one's own reason in particular. What does appear striking is that, in the documents that relate to his *Œdipe*, Voltaire seems totally unaware that there is more to writing a tragedy than just devising a plot which meets contemporary standards of *vraisemblance* and offers room for the expression of elevating feelings and a number of elegantly versified *lumina ingenii* the audience will remember.

It is the more surprising that 19th and 20th-century scholarship, despite its growing awareness of the characteristics of Greek tragedy, seems to have found no adequate response to Voltaire's criticism of the Tiresias scene. T. von Wilamowitz – whose seminal study of Sophocles' "dramatische Technik" made many German scholars rethink their interpretation of the plays – started the discussion. He resembles Voltaire in finding it "ganz unbegreiflich, daß Oedipus von allem was

der Seher sagt nichts hört und nichts behält." According to him (82), however, precisely this inexplicability was Sophocles' means of driving home to his audience "den Gegensatz des wissenden Sehers gegen den ahnungslosen Oedipus."

A further elaboration of this view can be found in a contribution by H. Drexler. According to him, the very contrast between divine omnipotence and omniscience on the one hand and human impotence and ignorance on the other, reveals the deepest meaning of Sophocles' play. Tiresias represents the gods: his view of reality is that of Apollo who, through the confrontation with Tiresias, leads Oedipus from ignorance to complete blindness. That is why Tiresias *has to* speak in vain and Oedipus *has to* misunderstand him. "Die Szene is psychologisch-charakterologisch nicht zu verstehen, sondern nur dramatisch-technisch und funktional." (Drexler 11) Sophocles' task, then, was an impossible one. What was required by the meaning of the play, from a viewpoint of psychology, could not be made plausible. Hence, Drexler (12) limits himself to showing "mit welch bewusster Kunst, mit wie sorgsam berechneten Mitteln Sophokles das Unmögliche möglich gemacht hat." One of the ways used would be that Sophocles made his main character's inability to grasp what he is told acceptable by making Oedipus fly into a rage about Tiresias' initial refusal to answer. As Bowra (195) puts it: "Oedipus fails to understand Tiresias or to think that there can can be anything in what he says, *simply* [my italics] because his anger is aroused and undermines his judgement. His only answer is that Tiresias shall not say this kind of thing twice. When the exact truth is told him, the wise Oedipus is too angry to grasp it."

It seems doubtful whether this suffices to counter Voltaire's criticism. If the intention is to depict *fundamental* human ignorance, this intention is frustrated when Oedipus fails to understand Tiresias, not because he is human, but because he is (understandably) enraged about being refused an answer to a question that is of prime importance for the well-being of the community. A circuitous attempt to explain this has been made by pointing out that Oedipus' temper is the 'tragic flaw' which even the most perfect of human beings cannot escape, but then the explanation comes to a grinding halt: Oedipus' rage is after all not the result of his temper, but comes from his concern about Thebes; this apart from the fact that the life of the 'tragic flaw' by now seems to have drawn to an end, and – more importantly – that Tiresias, on his part, also becomes incensed, which seems to

detract from his authority as the symbol and mouthpiece of all-knowing divine omnipotence.

In brief, the content and design of the dialogue make it difficult to believe that it was Sophocles' intention to show us an Oedipus who, as a symbol of human blindness, fails to understand what is made manifest to him, but that the poet destroyed the deeper significance of his scene because he could not resist catering for his audience's wish for psychological probability – which he could not satisfy anyway.

That this way of reading the scene is problematic indeed is clearly demonstrated by an attempt at interpretation made by J. Carrière who, after having made a number of observations that contribute to solving Voltaire's problem, in the end only manages to save the scene by assuming that the blind Tiresias does not notice that, before he delivers the last part of his speech, Oedipus has already gone into the palace. Now, apart from the fact that this runs the risk of producing an unintentional comic effect, it seems to be in direct conflict with the text: Tiresias' final words (460-1: καὶ ταῦτ' ἰὼν εἴσω λογίζου) in any other case would be understood as a stage direction included in the text, and fully justify the *exit Oedipus* in our editions. Moreover, it would be difficult to explain what artistic purpose may have motivated Sophocles to present his audience with an Oedipus who prohibits himself from hearing what he is told by slamming the door after him before his partner in the conversation has finished.

Should we, then, simply acknowledge that Voltaire was right, and conclude that *Oedipus* is not the perfect play it is said to be? After all, we are at liberty to take even Sophocles off a piedestal he does not deserve, if, that it to say, we have done everything in our power to make sense of what he has written – a requirement that does not serve our attachment to his reputation, but is a matter of hermeneutic method: as interpreters we are bound to assume that the text at hand is a perfect product, in which the function of each and every detail can be understood, and an interpreter who thinks himself smarter than his author does not meet the requirements of his task. A scholar's negative final judgement may only be based on his conviction that no satisfactory *historical* meaning can be derived from a text or its parts. The question whether a text does or does not meet his own moral or aesthetic standards is of course a legitimate one, but belongs to another 'province'. I cannot help feeling sympathy for a former Utrecht professor of Greek who had a reputation for being dry-as-dust, but gave him self away on the day he had forgotten his notes

and saw himself forced to improvise his lecture: he turned out to be moved by the *Antigone* to the point of shedding tears.

In the case of the Tiresias scene there appear to be at least two problems: what degree of 'vraisemblance' can we require from Sophocles, and: has this requirement been met in the play? I will start with the last question because, as far as I can see, Sophocles' text contains a number of elements which neither Voltaire nor the interpreters cited above have taken into account to a sufficient extent.

When closely following the development of the scene, the first thing that strikes one is that Tiresias' initial unwillingness to speak must be absolutely incomprehensible to Oedipus. In looking for an explanation of why Tiresias refuses to answer a question which affects the community so deeply (330-1), Oedipus ends up by suspecting that Tiresias himself is an accomplice in the murder of Laius (346-9). The rude terms in which he expresses his suspicion may be due to the temperament of the *tyrannos* he is, but this does not mean that his suspicion is ill-founded, as some interpreters suggest: "Oedipus' ganz unbegründete, mit seinem Zorn kaum motivierte Beschuldigung des Sehers, die nur den Zweck hat, diesen trotz seines Vorsatzes zum Preisgeben seines Wissens zu bringen, und gleich nachher für immer vergessen ist." (T. von Wilamowitz 76) There is no need whatsoever for stepping outside the reality the poet has defined, to find the reasons for Oedipus' suspicion, even less so when one realizes that Sophocles' audience needed fewer reasons than we do, to regard the dispute between Oedipus and Tiresias as normal: after all, the *mantis* is both the traditional rival of the king and, later on in the fifth century, was easily suspected of dishonesty and self-interest.

In any case, any Athenian will have fully understood that Oedipus, as a stranger, has suspicions about Creon who – in the absence of an heir – as the queen's brother would have taken the position of the deceased Laius had not Oedipus appeared upon the scene. Moreover, Sophocles has taken care to provide Oedipus with reasons that justify his suspicion. It is strange *indeed* that the investigation into the circumstances of Laius' death was not conducted more carefully. This is usually accounted for as *ἔξω τοῦ δράματος*. If that were all, Sophocles could have been expected to divert his audience's attention from it as much as possible. In fact, he makes Oedipus explicitly inquire after the actions that were undertaken at the time, to find out that the investigation rendered few results and was finally pushed into the background by more pressing problems (108-31). As a result of this,

the actual ἄλογον, that Oedipus learns of these facts only now, becomes less noticeable, and, more importantly, provides the basis for his suspicion. After all, it was *Creon* who led the aborted investigation. Oedipus' suggestion that the murderers must have had accomplices in Thebes (124) points in the same direction. Later on, when Tiresias appeals to the power of Apollo, the inherent probability of his suspicion suddenly springs to Oedipus' mind: it was *Creon* who brought Apollo's oracle from Delphi, and also *Creon* who (228) suggested that Apollo's prophet be summoned. So it is the name of Apollo coming from the mouth of Tiresias that makes Oedipus ask: Κρέοντος ἢ σοῦ[1] ταῦτα τἀξευρήματα; The spectator, who has been able to make the same combination and deduction, cannot but conclude that Oedipus' reasoning indeed had to take this very direction.

Thus, Oedipus assumes that Creon killed Laius, but failed to become king himself, because Oedipus saved Thebes from the Sphinx, and subsequently took Laius' place. After this, according to Oedipus, Creon contrived an oracle in order to remove the intruder, acting exactly in line with what Oedipus himself has indicated earlier: "he who killed Laius will not shrink from killing me too" (139-140) – a statement that only now gets its full significance. An additional motive for Tiresias to help scheme against Oedipus is that he is hurt by the king's success in disarming the Sphinx where he himself failed – a contrast Oedipus does not refrain from rubbing in.

So, far from jumping to conclusions, Oedipus is carefully adding up what he knows, and can only conclude that Creon is responsible, both for murdering Laius and for contriving an 'oracle' that is to remove the intruder from Thebes. Those who know no more than Oedipus have to come to the same conclusion, and will find the fact that Tiresias was not called earlier a confirmation of their being right (568).

That we can follow Oedipus' line of reasoning makes his ignorance all the more painful. Far from being an enraged symbol of human blindness, he is an intelligent and sensible man who, on the basis of legitimate reasoning, draws totally wrong conclusions. For the time being, however, the proof of his being wrong is held from him. Creon's self-defence does little or nothing to shake his conviction. 'Nobody', Creon says, 'would prefer being a king himself to having the safely powerful position that goes with being the king's brother.' This seems designed to reinforce Oedipus' suspicion – the more so

[1] There is a *varia lectio* τοῦ.

when one remembers that this type of argument is part of the stock-in-trade of the forensic orator who sees himself forced to argue from *ἄτοπον* and *εἰκός* because he is unable to provide real, hard evidence to prove his case.

There is, however, more than Tiresias' accusation that Oedipus killed Laius. Tiresias refers to the gruesome situation of Oedipus more than once, just as he repeats his initial accusation three times (350, 362, 449). Before having a closer look at Oedipus' reactions to all this, two preliminary points must be noted.

Oedipus not only knows the oracle that predicted his patricide and incest, but that oracle has haunted him for years. This explains his reaction to Tiresias' enigmatic statement that he may be a fool in Oedipus' eyes, but was regarded a wise man by Oedipus' parents (435-6). For one moment, his rage is pushed aside by the hope that Tiresias might be able to inform him about the identity of his parents:

> *ποίοισι; μεῖνον, τίς δέ μ' ἐκφύει βροτῶν;*

The reaction of a blinded man would have been one of triumph, now that there is more proof of Tiresias' ignorance. But Sophocles makes Oedipus express just disappointment:

> *ὡς πάντ' ἄγαν αἰνικτὰ κἀσαφῆ λέγεις.*

Later also, Oedipus explicitly speaks about the unrest the oracle has brought him (781 ff.), and which, until now, he has even kept from Iocaste.

Another element that is of pivotal importance to our understanding of the scene is that Oedipus cannot place the two questions that have to be answered in one and the same context, and therefore cannot even begin to suspect that the answers can only be found in the very fact that the seemingly separate questions about the identity of Laius' murderer and Oedipus' parents are closely connected. Oedipus cannot but see the content of Tiresias' accusation and his fear of the realization of the oracle as two separate things. This is what makes him say, later on (825), that, should he be forced to leave Thebes, this would bring back the threat that made him leave Corinth. Only when the messenger from Corinth and the old servant of Laius appear, he is in a position to see that one answer solves both questions.

Only if one constantly keeps in mind that (1) Oedipus knows and fears the old oracle, and (2) that he cannot see that the two questions are interdependent, does it become clear that it is impossible for him

to understand Tiresias' 'revelations'. What he is told is partly obscure, but first and foremost: must appear to him to be a confirmation of what he already knows.

> *λεληθέναι σε φημὶ σὺν τοῖς φιλτάτοις*
> *αἴσχισθ' ὁμιλοῦντ', οὐδ' ὁρᾶν ἵν' εἶ κακοῦ.* (366-7)

"Simple insistance, pense Oedipe, sur le prétendu scandale de son entrée dans la famille de sa victime." (Carrière 7) That Oedipus indeed understands the words in this way becomes clear from his answer:

> *ἦ καὶ γεγηθὼς ταῦτ' ἀεὶ λέξειν δοκεῖς;* (368):

in Tiresias' words he hears the continuation and elaboration of the earlier accusation.

The second mentioning of the actual situation may also be seen by Oedipus as inspired by Tiresias' wish to insist on his being the murderer of Laius:

> *σὺ καὶ δέδορκας κοὐ βλέπεις ἵν' εἶ κακοῦ,*
> *οὐδ' ἔνθα ναίεις, οὐδ' ὅτων οἰκεῖς μέτα.* (413-4)

The spectator, of course, will think of Oedipus' marriage to Iocaste, whereas Oedipus himself can only interpret these words as Tiresias' assessment of his present position in case he did indeed kill Laius. Later on, the thought that he may be living with the wife of the man he killed, appals him even before it has dawned upon him that this man may be his father, and the bed he shares that of his mother:

> *λέχη δὲ τοῦ θανόντος ἐν χεροῖν ἐμαῖν*
> *χραίνω, δι' ὧνπερ ὤλετο.* (821-2)

The result of Tiresias' further tirade (415-25) can be no more than the confirmation and repetition of the oracle he already knows. Since Tiresias is using the future tense (418, 420, 425), it is far from clear that the facts referred to have already become reality: the words only renew Oedipus' concern that the oracle will keep haunting him.

Before Tiresias leaves the stage, he once more repeats (449 ff.) everything he has said so far. The murderer they are looking for is present *here*, he will prove to be a Theban, and will be forced to leave the city.

> *φανήσεται δὲ παισὶ τοῖς αὑτοῦ ξυνὼν*
> *ἀδελφὸς αὑτὸς καὶ πατήρ, κἀξ ἧς ἔφυ*
> *γυναικὸς υἱὸς καὶ πόσις, καὶ τοῦ πατρὸς*
> *ὁμόσπορός τε καὶ φονεύς.* (457 ff.)

This time it is the ambiguity of φανήσεται ... ξυνών (457: 'it will turn out that he is now', or: 'he will turn out to be in the future') which misleads Oedipus, and, once again, makes him hear no more than a repetition of the prediction he already knows – however clear and indisputable Tiresias' words are to the spectator. After this, Oedipus silently leaves the stage. Only later, when he has been provided with the information he needs, will it turn out that he has taken in everything Tiresias has said.

Read in this way, the scene, far from presenting a symbol of human blindness with an all too human temperament, shows us a man who uses his intellect to the best of his ability, but who simply lacks the information that would enable him to see the truth that is hidden behind the surface of the facts he is familiar with. It is the very fact that, time and again, Tiresias' words seem to be the clear and direct expression of the horrible truth and yet can with reason be interpreted in a different way, which gives the scene its significance. Behind the comprehensible pattern we think we see, another pattern lies hidden which has nothing in common with our ideas of justice and reasonableness, and reduces our best efforts to understand what we see to wishful thinking.

To return to the second question asked above: if my argument has fulfilled its purpose it should by now be clear that Sophocles has indeed achieved a high degree of plausibility in the sense of what Aristotle termed εἰκός. It must have been easy for the the fifth century spectator to follow Oedipus' line of reasoning, and to see why he draws *his* conclusions from the data *he* has available. As a tool for analysis, Aristotle's term is preferable to the modern concept of 'psychological probability', if only because εἰκός and its counterpart ἄτοπον are at home in the sphere of forensic rhetoric, where it is the speaker's purpose to convince his audience that they would or would not have done or thought the same, had they been in the situation of the speaker. It is precisely this kind of εἰκός which enabled Sophocles' audience to identify with Oedipus to such an extent that they could experience his fate as the image of man's situation. The perfect balance between universal significance and plausibility, between abstract example and 'case history', makes the *Oedipus* a successful tragedy for those who are prepared to listen to it with the same sharpness as the audience Sophocles was addressing, whose proverbial interest in legal arguments may have enhanced their appreciation of the εἰκός of Oedipus' confrontation with Tiresias.

ARISTOTLE AND SOPHOCLES' *ELECTRA*

J.C. Kamerbeek
viro de Sophocle optime merito

1. The key element of Aristotle's *Poetics* is the idea that each product of *ποίησις* is the imitation[1] of an *action*. This action is defined as an ordered arrangement (*σύνθεσις* or *σύστασις*) of actions/events. The requirements to be met by the course of action, in this sense, provide the primary criteria for determining the quality of the individual pieces. A good *σύστασις* (alias: *μῦθος*, for lack of a better term usually translated as 'plot') is a whole, consisting of a beginning, a middle and an end. The internal structure of the action is described with the aid of the central concepts *εἰκός* and *ἀναγκαῖον*: the events which, together, constitute the plot have to show close coherence in the sense that each subsequent event necessarily, or at least with a large degree of probability, follows from the preceding events. The ideal action is an action in which coincidence does not play a major part: everything is as it is because, in the light of preceding events,[2] it could not or could hardly have been otherwise.

Judged by these fundamental criteria, Sophocles' *Electra* is far from satisfactory. The action in the restricted sense is summarized by Orestes (verse 38 ff.) as follows: Orestes, Pylades and the Pedagogue have come to Argos to take revenge on Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus for the murder of Agamemnon – an act which Apollo advised them to undertake 'by stratagem'. For this purpose, the Pedagogue will enter the palace to reconnoitre the situation and to bring the news of Orestes' death. In the meantime, Orestes and Pylades will go to Agamemnon's grave and honour it with a libation and a lock of hair. Afterwards, Orestes will go to the palace, carrying the urn that holds 'his ashes'. Thus he will create the opportunity to take revenge on those who, by killing his father, became his enemies (*ἐχθροί*), and to retake his rightful position as the heir and lord of Argos.

This sequence of actions is credible indeed in that it is possible (*δυνατόν*),[3] yet it is not in the least necessary or intrinsically probable:

---

[1] For the concept of *μίμησις* see p. 86 ff. of this volume.

[2] Cf. note 2 on p. 147 of this volume.

[3] Cf. *Poet.* 1451b16.

it is after all a 'plot' designed by Orestes (or Sophocles, if one prefers) which is only one out of several possibilities,[4] and the success of which (as Sophocles clearly indicates) is partly dependent on the absence of Aegisthus – is therefore dependent on chance.

It is even more important to observe that the role of Electra, who is unmistakably the central character in the play, in Orestes' plan – and with it in the action in the restricted sense – is of no importance. At the end of the prologue (82-85), Orestes hears her voice and suggests they wait and listen to her for a moment – a suggestion which is rejected by the Pedagogue: the execution of what needs to be done takes priority. Subsequently, the two main parts of Orestes' plan (the news of his death and the bringing of the urn) take place in the presence of Electra, but without her cooperation. The recognition of Orestes which is so crucial in the play, and the emotional outburst that follows it, even jeopardize the successful completion of the undertaking.

None of Electra's contributions to the action can be called indispensable. The only thing she actually does is speak to Aegisthus as he returns (1442 ff.). The main action cuts into the existence of the main character, as it were: the news of Orestes' death and afterwards the arrival of Orestes with the cinerary urn are events occurring at an arbitrary moment in the sad life of Electra. Strictly speaking, her presence is coincidental and, in any case, not required: in designing his plan, Orestes did not take her presence into account. And as for the recognition: it might as well have taken place later (which, practically speaking, would have been safer), or (as in Aeschylus' version of the event) earlier.

All in all, therefore, our diagnosis has to be that the primary characteristics of the action in the Aristotelian sense are indeed completely lacking in the *Electra*.

1.1. In addition to requirements to be met by the action in *all* forms of *ποίησις*, the *Poetics* also has requirements that are set for 'serious' *ποίησις* in particular.

First, in tragedy (as in epic), the action has to be a *πρᾶξις σπουδαία*, meaning an action in which the *dramatis personae* are *σπουδαῖοι*, people "who spend their lives, and if necessary lose them, for the prize

---

[4] As comparison with Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* and Euripides' *Electra* shows.

of ἀρετή."[5] It will be clear that, with regard to Electra particularly, this requirement is fully met.[6]

However, a more important question is whether the poet has created optimal conditions for the realization of the actual function (ἔργον) of tragedy, which, according to Aristotle, consists in the audience experiencing the sense of pleasure (ἡδονή) that stems from going through (or rather: indulging the need for) shocking emotions of the type that make one weep and tremble (ἔλεος, φόβος and τὰ τοιαῦτα παθήματα).

On this point also, Aristotle reasons primarily from the action. The pre-eminently tragic action contains a reversal (μεταβολή) from happiness to unhappiness. The effect of this is most poignant if, for the main character, the reversal coincides with a recognition (περιπέτεια). The arousal of the audience's emotions will be particularly successful when the reversal has an inextricable causal connection with preceding events, yet still comes as a surprise to the person experiencing it (*Poetics* 1452a4: παρὰ τὴν δόξαν δι' ἄλληλα). The combination of the unexpected and the inevitable, Aristotle says, is θαυμαστόν and therefore pre-eminently suited to shock the audience.

With regard to the question whether the *Electra* is a successful tragedy in the light of these requirements, Aristotle expresses himself both explicitly and clearly. After all, in the *Electra*, we have what he (1453a30 ff.) calls a διπλῆ σύστασις: the outcome of the action is (as in for example the *Odyssey*) positive for the 'good guys' (τοῖς βελτίοσιν) and negative for the 'bad guys' (τοῖς χείροσιν). This is a pattern which Aristotle regards as inferior to that in which the main character undergoes a change from happiness to unhappiness. Aristotle attributes the fact that others appreciate this type of action most, to the weakness of the audience (διὰ τὴν τῶν θεάτρων ἀσθένειαν). This would mean that in the *Electra*, Sophocles catered for the taste of his audience – an assumption which is not exactly confirmed by the interpretive history of the play.[7]

On a more detailed level, for Clytaemnestra and Aegisthus, a μεταβολὴ εἰς δυστυχίαν is taking place which is not unexpected, simply because it is something they have feared for years. The fact that it occurs precisely at this point is not inevitable but the result of Orestes'

[5] For this description of the concept of σπουδαιότης see Else 1957, 77.
[6] For the σπουδαιότης of Electra and its significance, see section 3 below.
[7] Cf. Van Erp Taalman Kip.

conscious manipulation, because he has misled them by the news of his death.

The potential, emotional impact of this on Clytaemnestra is not exploited by Sophocles: Orestes' striking arm strikes her behind the scene and her (formulaic and predictable) final cries are all we hear from her. For Aegisthus, the unexpected disclosure of the identity of his avenger, whom he believes to be dead, takes place on the stage. Sophocles seems set on taking away any feelings of sympathy the audience may have, and silences Aegisthus through Electra (1483) straight after he discovers he is facing Orestes.[8]

Electra's case is more complicated. In the course of the play, she goes through more than one change: Clytaemnestra's bad dream raises her hopes, the news of Orestes' death subsequently plunges her into an abyss of misery and sorrow, from which she is freed by the recognition of Orestes. The function of this curve of emotions will be discussed below under 3: it is important to point out here that in her case also, the reversals have nothing to do with the notion of 'peripeteia'. In terms of 'causality' they are the unintentional side effects of the implementation of Orestes' plan of revenge, or of his decision (unnecessary from the point of view of the action) to make himself known to her. For that reason, they would have met with little respect on Aristotle's part, even if the sequence of hope, despair and liberation that Electra goes through, has an emotional effect on the spectator that no doubt belongs to the realm of ἔλεος and φόβος.

1.2. As noted, the characteristics that make a tragedy a tragedy, for Aristotle, are first and foremost the characteristics of the action. The characteristics of the *dramatis personae* are secondary: they exist because there can be no action without human beings, and human beings have a certain 'character' and certain thoughts and ideas (διάνοια). Aristotle can even imagine a tragedy without characters (1450a23: ἄνευ μὲν πράξεως οὐκ ἂν γένοιτο τραγῳδία, ἄνευ δὲ ἠθῶν γένοιτ' ἄν).

This does not mean that Aristotle has nothing to say about the characteristics of the *dramatis personae* in a good tragedy: the ἦθος of the *dramatis peronae* has to help create adequate conditions for the realization of the function of the tragedy. For instance, an action that results

[8] Chrysothemis also goes through a change εἰς δυστυχίαν. Her emotions, however, are not significant in themselves, but serve as a foil for what Sophocles wants to show us with regard to Electra.

in happiness falling to a purely bad and inferior character would obstruct the emotions the spectator is supposed to feel, as would an action that destroys the life of a completely flawless human being.

In view of this, we may observe that Sophocles portrayed the characters that come to no good in the *Electra* in such a way that little or no respect, nor real sympathy, will fall to them.

Clytaemnestra is given a chance to defend herself (520 ff.), but Electra's unchallenged response tears her defence to shreds. The motherly feelings she displays upon receipt of the news of Orestes' death sound too egotistical (767-8: 'what bitterness, if I must lose a son to save my life') or are put in such generic terms that we are not really touched by them (770-1: 'however terrible her wrongs, a mother never hates her child').

Aegisthus does not appear until he is doomed and the way in which he addresses Electra makes one sympathize with her in her hatred of him. The best thing one can say about him is that at least he encounters his death with a minimal sense of honour.

Orestes is a flat character, little more than a noble son, who does what is needed to revenge his father's death and to retake his legitimate place as the ruler of Argos.

All in all, Sophocles has organized the play in such a way that Electra attracts all of the audience's potential for sympathy and compassion. This does not mean however, that she does meet the Aristotelian requirements. She is indeed *σπουδαία* and *χρηστή*, and her character is consistent (*ὁμαλόν*), but that is all. Once she has understood that she can no longer expect the arrival of Orestes, she takes on the role that according to the prevailing norm is a male avenger's role. And thus she sins against the Aristotelian criterion of *ἁρμόττον*, which explicitly excludes a woman who behaves 'like a man' (1454a22-2:*οὐχ ἁρμόττον γυναικὶ οὕτως ἀνδρείαν ἢ δεινὴν εἶναι*).[9]

2. As Kamerbeek (1974, 18) has it: "With regard to Sophocles' *Electra* (...) the dichotomy between *σύνθεσις* or *σύστασις πραγμάτων* and 'characters' which we owe to the analytical mind of Aristotle is a sadly defective tool of interpretation. For the matter with which this tragedy

[9] It should be clear that measuring the character of Electra by this criterion, blemishes the essence of Sophocles' play (as indeed of a number of other tragedies, such as the *Medea*): the very fact that Electra, in the circumstances she finds herself in, considers it her obligation to take upon herself the task of the male heir and avenger Orestes, is an important feature of the character Sophocles shows us.

deals, is, to be sure, the traditional matricide of the Atreidae saga but only in so far as the life and being and fate of its protagonist are bound up with it." At first sight, the above confirms this diagnosis of Kamerbeek: the distance between the ideal tragedy, according to Aristotelian standards, and Sophocles' *Electra* seems unbridgeable. Yet, upon closer inspection, there is more to be said on the subject.

To start with, the hierarchy in which the action comes first and the characteristics of the persons are secondary, is not the same throughout the *Poetics*. The fundamental dichotomy between epic and tragedy on the one hand, and comedy and other forms of 'non-serious' ποίησις on the other hand, is, after all, based on the distinction between σπουδαῖοι and φαῦλοι: 'in view of the fact that the imitation is an imitation of acting persons, and since these are either σπουδαῖοι or φαῦλοι (...), these persons will be either better than people are on average, or worse' (1448a1ff.): the differentiation of ποίησις in two different genres is subsequently derived from this principle.

In his discussion of the distinction between the task of the historian and that of the poet, Aristotle (1451a36 ff.) also attributes a more important role to the characters than he does elsewhere. As he has it, the poet, as opposed to the historian, is not concerned with events that have actually taken place (τὰ γενόμενα), but with events that are conceivable in the pregnant sense of being in accordance with the laws of probability (οἷα ἂν γένοιτο). Consequently, the poet moves in an area which in a sense belongs to the realm of philosophy (φιλοσοφώτερον). Historians are concerned with the question "what an individual, such as Alcibiades, did and what happened to him," but the subject of ποίησις is the generic (τὰ καθόλου), for instance, "the kinds of thing a certain type of person will probably or necessarily say or do in a given situation." (τῷ ποίῳ τὰ ποῖα ἄττα συμβαίνει ἢ λέγειν ἢ πράττειν)

A similar formula may be found in a kind of *post scriptum* (1454a33 ff.) to the passage devoted to the ἦθος of the *dramatis personae*: "the poet, in his characters as well as in the design of the action, always has to aim at either the necessary or the probable, so that it is either necessary or probable that a person with certain characteristics does or says certain things" (χρὴ δὲ καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἤθεσιν ὁμοίως ὥσπερ καὶ ἐν τῇ τῶν πραγμάτων συστάσει ἀεὶ ζητεῖν ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ἢ τὸ εἰκός, ὥστε τὸν τοιοῦτον τὰ τοιαῦτα λέγειν ἢ πράττειν ἀναγκαῖον ἢ εἰκός).

Together, these formulas offer some room for a tragedy in which, as in the *Electra*, the point is not the compelling connection between the actions and events, but the compelling relation between the

characteristics of a person and that which this person says or does in a given situation.

3. In his *Electra*, Sophocles has given shape to the traditional story, including those aspects that may run counter to one's moral preferences, in such a way that Electra's participation in it is the manifestation of true nobility, the behaviour of the εὐγενὴς γυνή she claims to be (257). If one is to evaluate the play, the question that should be asked is whether the spectator finds Electra's extreme hatred of Clytaemnestra, which culminates in her appeal to Orestes to strike their mother a second time (1415: παῖσον, εἰ σθένεις, διπλῆν), reprehensible and revolting, or, if not exactly admirable, at least understandable to the extent that he can go on identifying and sympathizing with her.

Sophocles' intentions to achieve something along these lines become clear at various places in the text. It is impossible for Electra, she tells the chorus, to act in any other way. An irresistible force compels her to do what she does: it is unthinkable for a noble woman to do anything else:

> ἀλλ' ἡ βία γὰρ ταῦτ' ἀναγκάζει με δρᾶν,
> σύγγνωτε. πῶς γάρ, ἥτις εὐγενὴς γυνή,
> πατρῷ' ὁρῶσα πήματ', οὐ δρῴη τάδ' ἄν; (256-7)

In circumstances such as hers, normal standards cannot be applied, because Clytaemnestra's murdering of Agamemnon calls for revenge:

> ἐν τοῖς κακοῖς
> πολλή 'στ' ἀνάγκη κἀπιτηδεύειν κακά (308-9)[10]

At Chrysothemis' suggestion that it would be better to give in to those who just happen to be stronger, she answers that it is impossible for her to show that kind of obedience: οὐκ ἐμοὺς τρόπους λέγεις (397). Clytaemnestra is also told that her hostility forces Electra to do what she does: disgraceful behaviour can only be responded to by disgraceful behaviour:

> ἀλλ' ἡ γὰρ ἐκ σοῦ δυσμένεια καὶ τὰ σὰ
> ἔργ' ἐξαναγκάζει με ταῦτα δρᾶν βίᾳ·
> αἰσχροῖς γὰρ αἰσχρὰ πράγματ' ἐκδιδάσκεται (610-1).

[10] In a context like this, κακόν connotes 'harm' rather than 'evil' in a moral sense.

Sophocles organized everything in the play in such a way that Electra's situation exerts a maximum of compelling power. Doubt about whether her hatred and the revenge taken on the two murderers of Agamemnon are justified, is never even suggested.[11] On the contrary: as early as the prologue, Orestes' plan is said to be in agreement with *δίκη* three times (34, 37, 70), an evaluation which is shared by the Chorus (for instance, at 1422) and by Chrysothemis (338, 1042). Clytaemnestra, in turn, also appeals to *δίκη* as an excuse, but Electra makes it clear (582-3) that the understanding of the concept which is behind her appeal, results in it also being *δίκη* to punish her by killing her.

The way the murder of Agamemnon is discussed (124 ff., 193 ff.) and the motives attributed to the murderers (i.e. 197) are equally suited to impress the spectator with the reprehensibility of Clytaemnestra's and her lover's behaviour. Any feeling of sympathy for Clytaemnestra is effectively blocked by her prayer to Apollo, in which she prays, in guarded terms, for the death of her son, whom she regards as her enemy because he threatens her undisturbed ownership of wealth and power (650 ff.). The treatment Electra has to endure also serves to enhance the spectator's understanding of her repeated assurance that she cannot act in any other way: to be the reproach incarnate to the murderers of her father, thus keeping the fear of Orestes' revenge alive.

The factors mentioned above result in the spectator experiencing Electra's reaction to the situation she is put in as inevitable, both rationally and instinctively – the more so because Sophocles uses Chrysothemis as a foil for Electra, so as to make clear the fact that and the reason why the alternative for someone of Electra's moral stature is not a real possibility. Chrysothemis' refusal to cooperate with Electra is prompted by weakness (946: *ξυνοίσω πᾶν ὅσονπερ ἂν σθένω*, and 997-8: *γυνὴ μὲν οὐδ' ἀνὴρ ἔφυς, σθένεις δ' ἔλασσον τῶν ἐναντίων χερί*) and insecurity about the result (1005-6: *λύει γὰρ ἡμᾶς οὐδὲν οὐδ' ἐπωφελεῖ βάξιν καλὴν λαβόντε δυσκλεῶς θανεῖν*). Electra's appeal to her to take courage is based on arguments that belong to the very core of the standards and values by which true *ἀρετή* is measured: Aegisthus prevents both sisters from marrying and thus from bringing into the world an avenger of their father's death (962 ff.). It is their duty (968: *εὐσέβεια*) towards Agamemnon to help kill Aegisthus, and beside freedom (970), it will bring fame to those who were ready to sacrifice

---

[11] For a discussion of several attempts that have been made to prove that there are suggestions of doubt in the play, see Van Erp Taalman Kip.

their lives to free the ancestral home from its enemies (973 ff.). It is understandable, humanly speaking, that these arguments are not strong enough for Chrysothemis. However, morally speaking, it makes her inferior to Electra, who, by this very contrast, manifests herself as an outstanding example of σπουδαιότης.

In an objective sense, the spectator's understanding of Electra has been founded as solidly as is conceivable. However, intellectual understanding is not the same as compassion. Sophocles ensures that his main character receives the latter mainly by way of the emotional effects caused by the successive changes he subjects her to. The picture Sophocles provides us with of the situation she finds herself in, enables us to gauge the full depth of the effect the news of Orestes' death has on her, and makes her decision to kill Aegisthus herself, however extreme, credible and understandable. The fact that the actual execution of her decision is difficult to conceive increases our awareness of the hopelessness of the unbearable situation she has been put in.

The release of conflicting emotions brought about by the return of Orestes, frees the spectator from the last emotional reserves he may have towards Electra. Now, together with Electra, he experiences Orestes' arrival as the ultimate liberation Electra has been hoping for, and shares Electra's feelings towards Orestes and the Pedagogue, who saved her brother from the hands of Agamemnon's murderers. If only for this woman, Orestes had to do what she herself was prepared to do, but might not have accomplished. Both rationally and emotionally, she has as much right to appeal to Orestes to strike Clytaemnestra a second time, as she has to play her taunting cat-and-mouse game with Aegisthus – whom she had rightfully decided, if need be, to kill with her own hands.

If we read and experience the play in this way, the action may indeed be characterized as the inevitable (ἀναγκαῖον) result of the confrontation of a noble character, an εὐγενὴς γυνή, with the situation created in Mycenae by Aegisthus and Clytaemnestra. However, this does not provide a full answer to the question whether the play is a fully satisfactory tragedy. Personally, I tend to agree with Kamerbeek, who, in the Latin *praefatio* to his commentary, says that he cannot regard the play as a "summae artis dramaticae specimen." For me, but not for Kamerbeek, the most important reason for this assessment lies in the fact that the climax of Electra's desperation is caused by the *fictional* story of Orestes' death.

Where, in his other plays, Sophocles so effectively uses the advantage of previous knowledge the audience has over the *dramatis personae*, in the *Electra*, our knowledge of the fact that Orestes is alive seems to lessen the intensity of the emotions we are supposed to undergo together with Electra: we know that her despair is unnecessary, and that this will soon become clear. The messenger story, however ingenious, does not make us forget that all this misery is needless and the course of action unnecessarily cruel to Electra:

"Und das alles ist ja erfunden, und der Zuschauer weiß, daß es nicht wahr ist. Bei der ersten Botschaft hatte die Lüge einen auf die Handlung berechneten Zweck, wenn der Pfeil auch weit über das Ziel hinausflog: Klytaimnestra sollte getäuscht werden. Aber die zweite täuscht Elektra. Freilich redet sich Orestes ein, er dürfe sich nicht entdecken; in der Tat hätte das beim ersten Verse sowenig Schaden angerichtet wie beim hunderdsten. Die Grausamkeit, die Elektra die Urne in der Hand Todtenklage halten lässt um einen Lebenden, geht weit über die Grausamkeit hinaus die einen Lebenden todt meldet. Sophokles hat offenbar das Publikum vollständig vergessen und nur Elektra selbst im Auge gehabt: für sie hat er die Todesbotschaft gedichtet – Klytaimnestra wäre auch mit geringerem zu befriedigen gewesen – um sie zur Verzweiflung und in der Verzweiflung zum Entschluß zu bringen, selbst das zu thun was Orestes nicht mehr thun konnte; für sie hat er gewaltsam, ohne daß der Gang der Handlung es forderte, eine Situation geschaffen, die im tiefsten Schmerz und in der höchsten Freude Elektra's ganze unendliche Liebe für den Bruder enthüllte, für ihn, auf den sie zuvor bittere Vorwürfe wegen seines langen Ausbleibens gehäuft hatte." (Kaibel 52-3)

In brief, it is as if Sophocles had to call forth too much virtuosity in order to make his audience forget that Electra's despair is the result of needless deception or, if one prefers, of manipulation by the poet. This, by the way, confirms Aristotle's intuition which told him that a deficient causal interlacement of the components in an action puts the emotional impact of a tragedy in jeopardy. Yet the superior quality of Sophocles' dramatic genius is manifest in that, in the final scene of the play, we do not withhold our compassion from a daughter who actively desires and welcomes the death of her mother.

ADMETUS' CASE

1. The *Alcestis* was first performed in 438 as the fourth play in a tetralogy. No less a critic than Lessing thought that, for this reason, the play must be regarded as a satyr play rather than a tragedy, but, nowadays, most scholars will find that it has too little in common with *Ichneutae* and *Cyclops* and too much with full-blown tragedies to be at home in the category *σατυρικόν*. They therefore tend to describe it as a "pro-satyric play"[1] or a "tragi-comedy"[2] – following the ancient hypothesis, where the play is called *σατυρικώτερον, ὅτι εἰς χαρὰν καὶ ἡδονὴν καταστρέφει παρὰ τὸ τραγικόν*. This, however, would seem to be a way of having it both ways rather than an explanation of what motivated Euripides to write such a curious hybrid. We would probably be in a better position to solve the problem if we knew more about Phrynichus' satyr drama *Alcestis*, in which Apollo himself achieved his purpose by getting the Moirai drunk.[3] For now, I prefer to regard the play as a tragedy which Euripides made number four in his tetralogy because he had a reason to include some 'capers' or 'caprioles' – such as the grim Thanatos (who has no place of his own in Greek myth) and the *bon vivant* Heracles. I will return to the function of these 'satyric' elements in Section 5 below.

1.1. A number of interpreters have attempted to solve the difficulties they had with Euripides' way of treating his subject matter either by denying that he made any attempt at psychological realism,[4] or by resorting to anachronistic 'psychologizing'. Wilamowitz, for instance, saw in Alcestis a frustrated woman, who, as a disappointed wife and responsible mother, has to make the sacrifice she took upon herself when she was Admetus' young, loving bride.[5] Van Lennep[6] advocated a quasi-Freudian view of Alcestis as being driven by ambition, and of Admetus as an infantile egoist. The main objection to this kind of approach is that it requires a great deal of hyper-interpretation and of filling in what is not expressly stated or even hinted at in the play,

---

[1] Dale 1954, xviii. [2] Kitto 1966, 311 ff.

[3] See Pohlenz 1930, 244 and Conacher 1967, 328. [4] Zürcher 1947.

[5] *Griech. Trag.* III, 187. A variation of this can be found in Pohlenz 1930: Alcestis, when she has to fulfil her vow, has in the meantime been given more responsibility.

[6] 1949, Introduction. Cf. Rosenmeyer 1963, 228.

and cannot be naturally conveyed by actors who have to operate within the limitations of Athenian stage conventions.[7] Between these two extremes, the approach of A.M. Dale seems eminently sensible: she rejects the search for 'psychological complexities' and the demand for a 'synthetic portrait', while fully acknowledging that one should have an eye for what Zürcher calls the 'dramatic effect', and she herself the 'rhetoric', of certain situations. In the terms of Aristotle: one acknowledges the primacy of the πρᾶξις, regards ἠθοποιΐα (rather than 'psychology') as secondary, but certainly not lacking or unimportant, and reckons with a certain tension between short term rhetorical effectiveness and consistency of ἦθος.

1.2. It is fortunate that not just classicists but also a number of poets have occupied themselves with Alcestis. In an illuminating overview of their activities, Kurt von Fritz (1956)[8] has shown how their attempts at doing a better job than Euripides may enhance our understanding of Euripides' play.

Apart from curiosities such as Morrison's attempt to breathe dramatic life into Verrall's apparently dead Alcestis,[9] Euripides' fellow poets, all of them, tried to emphasize the romantic and idealizing features of the fairy tale. In order to enhance both the credibility of Alcestis' love for Admetus and the 'poetic justice' of the happy ending, they wanted to make Admetus more sympathetic than the one Euripides created. Some tried to achieve this by turning him into a fatherly ruler with superhuman wisdom, who cannot be missed by his subjects, and therefore simply cannot refuse the sacrifice of his beloved wife. This enables the poet to make Admetus love Alcestis as much and as romantically as she loves him, and it will make the happy ending satisfy both moralists and sentimentalists. Others keep Admetus in the dark about Alcestis' vow until it has become irrevocable, thus putting him into a position in which he cannot but accept her offer, so that he deserves a happy ending almost more than his loving wife.

Von Fritz interprets all these attempts at improving on Euripides' plot as misunderstandings. Euripides' intention would have been to strip the fairy tale of its romance by turning it into reality, because he wanted to show that a man who accepts his wife's 'death out of love' must be a sorry creature, and that her sacrifice is useless anyway

---

[7] See Lesky 1963, 205 ff. [8] Cf. also Albini.

[9] *The Dream of Alcestis* (New York 1950).

because it will not enable the beneficiary to live happily ever after, and kills the very affection it is inspired by – as becomes manifest in the fact that husband and wife become estranged at the very moment Alcestis sacrifices herself for Admetus. In the 'finale' of his play, Euripides returned to the happy ending of the fairy tale in order to emphasize the tragic impossibility to sacrifice oneself for someone else without this having paradoxical consequences both for the victim and the beneficiary. Admetus' last words in the play, *οὐ γὰρ εὐτυχῶν ἀρνήσομαι* (1158), in Von Fritz' view, have the ring of irony: they sound almost like a rhetorical question, which Admetus and Euripides gave different answers to.

In this view, Wieland, Hofmannsthal *e tutti quanti* failed to grasp the artistic purpose of their ancient predecessor because, in the end, the fairy tale proved stronger than Euripides, who did not succeed in taking away its naive lustre, and thus failed to convince his romanticist colleagues, who were too weak for his harsh and unsentimental view of life.

Despite its unmistakable merits, Von Fritz' interpretation did not carry the day, presumably because it seemed to damage Euripides' reputation as a poet and because many a scholar had reasons of his own for holding on to the belief that Euripides' Alcestis was meant to be a model of marital love and that both her husband and she herself fully deserved the happy ending brought about by Heracles.[10] It would indeed be more satisfactory if, instead of regarding the *Alcestis* as a failure, one could show that the difficulties it has caused, are due to the inability of later generations to share the 'frame of reference' of Euripides' original audience, rather than to the poet's inability to make himself clear. After all, the belief that Greek tragedies are 'timeless' has played tricks on interpreters before.

2. The fairy tale of a woman who, out of love for her husband, offers to take his place in death, occurs in many places outside Greece.[11] It usually demonstrates that the love of a wife for her husband is stronger than that of parents, relatives and friends.

Euripides' version of this fairy tale, however, contains elements that seem rather alien to its traditional tenor. Alcestis indeed articulates the significance of her sacrifice by contrasting it with the refusal of

[10] Cf. Lesky 1963, in which this is very clear.

[11] See Hesseling 1914 and Lesky 1925. Cf. Conacher 327 f.

Admetus' parents: "your father and she who gave birth to you abandoned you. Yet they had reached the time to depart from life, the time to save you and thus die gloriously. You were after all their only child and they could not expect to have more children after your death" (291-4). Admetus himself, confronted with his father while standing by Alcestis' bier, shares her premises: Pheres, he says, has only a short while to live in any case, and has found the fulfilment of his existence in begetting and raising a son. If he now puts his own life before that of his son, he no longer deserves the name of a father.[12]

The idea behind this is clearly not that Admetus' parents did not have enough *love*, but that they failed to do their *duty*. One should think here of Pericles' funeral oration in Thucydides, where similar views are expressed on the relative importance fathers and children have for the community: "You should bear the loss of your children, hoping for more children, if, that is to say, you are of an age when you can still have them. They will make you forget the dead ones, they will defend our city and ensure its continued existence. (...) If you are too old to hope for other children, you should regard past happiness as profit and remember that the time that remains will not be long. In the useless remainder of your existence, the glory of your children will comfort you." (II.44,3 ff.)

In a society where the life of an old man who has lost his son in battle could be called 'useless', the Alcestis story can hardly have been just a touching fairy tale. It must have symbolized a hierarchy of values in which the love between husband and wife is not so much a value in itself as a means to ensure the continuity of one's *genos* and citizenry – a continuity in which the individual is less important than the group, than the 'species' if one likes. It is from this perspective that Alcestis and Admetus disapprove of Pheres' behaviour.

2.1. Pheres himself takes a different view. He feels that he has more than fulfilled his duty towards Admetus, and contrasts (691-3) the allegedly greater claim on life of his son with his own will to live: "You take pleasure in life: do you believe a father does not?" (χαίρεις ὁρῶν φῶς· πατέρα δ' οὐ χαίρειν δοκεῖς;). The argument between father and son, of which these words form a part, has often been regarded as a vulgar quarrel between two egoists standing by the bier of the de-

[12] See primarily *Alc.* 648 ff. and the verdict expressed by the chorus in 466 ff.

ceased Alcestis,[13] but the scene is certainly done more justice if one hears in what Pheres has to say the protest of an individual against an ethical code that makes him into a mere link in the continuity of life, to be disposed of as soon as he has fulfilled his function. "I begot you and raised you", he says, "but taking your place in death is a duty that neither Thessalian nor Greek laws impose on me":

> *σαυτῷ γὰρ εἴτε δυστυχὴς εἴτ' εὐτυχὴς*
> *ἔφυς· ἃ δ' ἡμῶν χρῆν σε τυγχάνειν, ἔχεις.* (680-682)

And further on:

> *τί δῆτα σ' ἠδίκηκα; τοῦ σ' ἀποστερῶ;*
> *μὴ θνῇσχ' ὑπὲρ τοῦδ' ἀνδρός, οὐδ' ἐγὼ πρὸ σοῦ.* (689-90)

This is Pheres' answer to the appeal Admetus makes to him, an appeal that is based not on love but on the duty of a father towards his children. Now that Pheres has failed to live up to this duty, Admetus can no longer regard him as a father (636 f.), and in turn considers himself free from any further duties as a son (662 ff.).

It would of course be putting it too strongly if one were to claim that Greek parents had the moral duty to die in the place of their (male) children: after all, life as it is does not allow substitute dying. Yet when one describes ethics as a given hierarchy of values an individual is to use as a guide when he has to make a choice between two ways of acting, the drift of the Greek moral system apparently is that it would advise someone who finds himself in the situation of Pheres, to hold his own life inferior to that of his son. Pheres rejects this obligation and it is perfectly clear why: he holds his own will to live superior. For him, the family's solidarity goes a long way, but is limited by the individual's own rights.

Of course Pheres "is hardly the mouthpiece of truth" (A.M. Dale): he only expresses one possible choice, and does this in a way that makes our feelings for him ambivalent. What he has to say, however, will have affected the audience's appreciation of the views of the other *dramatis personae*: Lesky's statement (1963, 130) that Pheres is depicted

---

[13] The reader will note a curious difference of opinion between Von Wilamowitz and Van Lennep. The former had criticized Euripides for temporarily losing sight of what is suitable for the 'Grandseigneur' Admetus is. Van Lennep (25) replied to this that "it would appear to us that Admetus does not altogether come up to what we expect of a grandseigneur, but possibly to the German mind the word has a sense different from the one which we attach to it."

as 'deficient', certainly goes too far. Making him (as Lesky, and, to a lesser extent, A.M. Dale do) mainly serve the purpose of highlighting the honour and glory of the loving Alcestis, would result in completely depriving him of the sympathy of the audience.

3. The next question to be asked is: what do we learn about the motives of Alcestis herself? What the other *dramatis personae* have to say about this, is summarized in the words Pheres speaks at her bier – which constitute much more than a formal speech for the occasion:

> *ἥκω κακοῖσι σοῖσι συγκάμνων, τέκνον·*
> *ἐσθλῆς γάρ, οὐδεὶς ἀντερεῖ, καὶ σώφρονος*
> *γυναικὸς ἡμάρτηκας* (614-6).

"She must be honoured who died to save your life, who did not allow that I would grow old alone without you. All women share in the glory of this noble deed. You, Alcestis, who saved your husband and raised us up when we threatened to fall, farewell. If any marriage shows that marrying is profitable, then this one does" (619-29).

It should be noted in passing that Pheres' refusal to adhere to the prevailing norm is called forth only when he himself is threatened by it: if it demands that Alcestis sacrifices herself, he gladly accepts its consequences, because it will enable his son to support his father when he will be no longer able to take care of himself.

The terms used by the other *dramatis personae* for praising Alcestis are almost without exception untranslatable words of commendation: *ἀρίστη, ἐσθλή, γενναία, σώφρων, κεδνή, πιστή, εὐκλεής, ἀξία τιμῆς*. They describe a woman who embodies all the co-operative virtues, who complies with her duties and norms perfectly, who can be counted upon and whose name must be mentioned with great respect.

Of Alcestis' love for Admetus as a person the words used do not speak or hardly at all. She is called 'trustworthy' and 'faithful', and is to be praised for putting her husband's worth above her own:

> *πῶς δ' οὐκ ἀρίστη; τίς δ' ἐναντιώσεται;*
> *τί χρὴ λέγεσθαι τὴν ὑπερβεβλημένην*
> *γυναῖκα; πῶς δ' ἂν μᾶλλον ἐνδείξαιτό τις*
> *πόσιν προτιμῶσ' ἢ θέλουσ' ὑπερθανεῖν;* (152-5)

Admetus too, when lamenting his loss, does so from the perspective of a loving husband rather than of his loving wife. He will miss her, without her his life will be without joy. He too praises Alcestis as the

only one who does not abandon him, who remains faithful to him: an outstanding wife and mother to his children.

All in all, these reactions provide us with a picture of a woman who sacrifices herself, not so much because she wants a beloved husband to live, but because the norms and values of the society she lives in compel her to face this consequence. Much of what has been found surprising in Alcestis can be explained if one realizes that her behaviour springs from her devotion to her duty, from her will to conform fully to prevailing norms. This may also explain why Euripides thought it fit to change the 'chronology' of the fairy tale, where everything happens within hours on the day of the wedding. By introducing an interval of some years between the moment of Alcestis' vow and the moment when Death appears to collect his prey, he made Alcestis' sacrifice of herself into a deliberate decision rather than a spontaneous expression of overwhelming love.[14]

3.1. More important than the reactions of the other *dramatis personae* are of course Alcestis' own words and behaviour. They contain a great deal that has surprised critics. One much-discussed issue is the question why Alcestis' affection for Admetus is expressed in such reserved terms. As Pohlenz (1937, 250) has it: "Befremdlich kühl kann uns ihr Gefühl für Admet erscheinen. Nichts davon daß der Gedanke an seine Wiederverheiratung sie persönlich als seine Frau schmerzt. Kein Wort kommt über ihre Lippen, das wirkliche Liebe zu ihm verrät." The reason for this, he feels, is Euripides' wish to bring to the surface the idea of sacrifice cleanly and purely, without being mixed with other, subjective expressions of "außersittliches Empfinden." Alcestis is to illustrate how a woman, by giving her life for her husband, may obtain the κλέος that goes with ἀρετή.

On stage, Alcestis limits herself to the following:

> ἐγώ σε πρεσβεύουσα κἀντὶ τῆς ἐμῆς
> ψυχῆς καταστήσασα φῶς τόδ' εἰσορᾶν,
> θνῄσκω, παρόν μοι μὴ θανεῖν, ὑπὲρ σέθεν,
> ἀλλ' ἄνδρα τε σχεῖν Θεσσαλῶν ὃν ἤθελον,

[14] Those who, in spite of the longer time, still want to see love as the main issue, may think, as has been done, that Euripides creates a better chance, this way, for himself to make Alcestis into something more than a 'flat character'. Cf. Pohlenz (1937, 250): "So ist sie die Mutter, der auch die Liebe zu den Kindern das Scheiden schwer macht. Nur die Sorge um deren Zukunft quält sie in der Todesstunde."

καὶ δῶμα ναίειν ὄλβιον τυραννίδι.
οὐκ ἠθέλησα ζῆν ἀποσπασθεῖσα σοῦ
σὺν παισὶν ὀρφανοῖσιν, οὐδ' ἐφεισάμην
ἥβης, ἔχουσ' ἐν οἷς ἐτερπόμην ἐγώ. (282-9)

According to A.M. Dale, this is to be read as a reserved expression of love by an Athenian woman who was not allowed to speak openly of her love. Alcestis' real feelings must be gathered from what Euripides tells us later, by means of a servant, about Alcestis' taking her leave of the conjugal bedroom. I will return to this at the end of this section. It should be said here that it seems unsatisfactory to look for the fundamental motive for Alcestis' actions in something that Euripides suppressed because he wanted his Alcestis to observe the proper forms. After all, in other instances, he does not refrain from having both his female and his male characters break the rules of conduct, as Aristophanes well knew.

Surprise has also been expressed about the way in which Alcestis speaks about herself in her last conversation with Admetus. She is, she says, willing to die for him because she gives him priority over herself. She could have lived and chosen another royal house, but she did not want to live on without her husband with fatherless children. "If your parents had made the sacrifice, I would not have had to die and you would not have had to mourn me. But this is how it is: the gods want it this way. I now ask you to grant me my rightful repayment: let our children be the masters of this house and do not set a stepmother over them: she could only be inferior to me and would harm them out of jealousy. A son needs his father most of all; that I cannot give my daughter in marriage, is a great sadness to me. I hope she will still be able to marry well.[15] You, my husband, may boast you had an outstanding wife; you, my children, that you were born of the best of mothers" (280-325).

Lesky, whose very fondness of Alcestis as a loving and self-effacing wife seems to have made him particularly aware of the play's resistance to reading it as a 'romantic' parable, explains this curious goodbye of a loving wife to her beloved husband in two ways: "Wenn diese Alkestis mit einer Sachlichkeit die den Modernen kühl anmutet von der Grösse ihres Opfers spricht, dann tritt darin ein Grundzug griechischen Wesens hervor, jenes *λόγον διδόναι*, das den eigenen Platz

[15] The reader will note that the daughter is also given less priority than the son.

in der Welt kennen und rechtfertigen will. Die Objektivität mit der dies geschieht, stellt die Alkestis zu den grossen Schöpfungen klassischer griechischer Kunst". And: "diese Alkestis zeigt jene echt Hellenische Epideixis, die sich mit Goethe's Wort umschreiben lässt: *Das Wesen, wär' es, wenn es nicht erschiene?*" (1956, 60)

One may wonder whether such an approach indeed suffices to justify Lesky's image of Alcestis. It may be more helpful to realize that, in this scene also, Euripides is characterizing a woman who is determined to take upon herself the role that is required of a wife and mother by the traditions she was raised in, rather than showing his audience the "edle Einfalt und stille Größe" of a loving wife's sacrifice for her husband and his children.

Alcestis' demand that Admetus will not remarry then also becomes understandable: 'I do my duty, you do yours.' If her death is not a sacrifice that is made freely, but an obligation imposed on her by the failure of Admetus' parents, it is indeed wanted by the gods and unavoidable, and her final words, instead of cool self-glorification, become a real comfort: 'it is sad, but this is how it has to be, yet you will find comfort in being proud of a woman who was truly a wife and mother.' If one feels that there is an element of fanaticism in this rigorous devotion to duty, this may testify to Euripides' qualities as a judge of human character.

As the servant tells us, Alcestis, when she was alone in her bedroom, burst into tears, threw herself on the conjugal bed and said: "You, my bed, in which I gave up my virginity to the man for whom I now die: farewell. I do not hate you, even though I am the one whose death you are causing. Because I refrained[16] from betraying you and my husband, I now die. Another woman will possess you, less *σώφρων* than I, but possibly more fortunate (*εὐτυχεστέρη*)" (174-82).[17]

It seems to me that this is not just an expression of the emotions a high-born woman would refrain from expressing in public, but that here too we hear the voice of a woman who has decided to conform to the requirements she must meet. This seems to fit in with a number

---

[16] *ὀκνέω* indicates the will to act in an ethically responsible way, just like *τολμάω* so often indicates the opposite.

[17] In line 182, one will have to take *μᾶλλον* both with *σώφρων* and with *εὐτυχής*. The 'ambition' which has been heard in the line would require a reversal of the two concepts: 'possibly more fortunate than I, but less *σώφρων*'.

of other characteristics of Alcestis' behaviour, such as her adorning herself in death's garments, shedding no tears in front of her servants and even having a kind word for the lowest of them, and, last but not least: her demanding from Admetus that there will be no other woman (305): he will have to give precedence to her children and to live up to the standards she has set. The knowledge that those who remain will honour her memory (373) and that her death will distinguish her from others is to offer her compensation for fulfilling a sad duty. Pheres' statement, which is diametrically opposite: *κακῶς ἀκούειν οὐ μέλει θανόντι μοι* (726) may serve as a comment.

4. Admetus – "dessen Beurteilung so widersprüchlich ist, dass einem um die Euripides-Interpretation bange werden könnte" (Lesky 1963, 204) – has proved a handful to most critics. One glimpse at what has been written about him, shows that it is almost impossible to both save the romance of the fairy tale of marital love and make Admetus acceptable, including all the details Euripides used to construct him. If it were Alcestis' love for him that motivates her to die in his place, he simply could have, and perhaps even should have, refused her offer. But, far from engaging in a *combat de générosité*, he accepts it, and even complains about the misfortune that strikes him of all people, and says that he feels 'deserted' by her. This is what made Van Lennep regard him as a sentimental and infantile egoist who cannot understand that he is confronted with a true dilemma, but wants to have his cake and eat it.

If however, Alcestis dies because prevailing norms tell her that the husband must take precedence over the wife, just as it considers the parents as dispensable as soon as the children are mature, then it becomes easier to understand how Admetus can lament the events as being an unhappy fate that strikes him and his wife *together*:

> *ὁρᾷς σὲ κἀμέ, δύο κακῶς πεπραγότας*
> *οὐδὲν θεοὺς δράσαντας ἀνθ' ὅτου θανῇ.* (246–7; cf. also 259)

Indeed, he is *not* at liberty to refuse her offer, and to a certain extent, he is as much a victim as she is. Even his request to Alcestis to prepare a place for him in the hereafter, because, in death, he does not want to be separated from the one person whom he could depend on in life (367-8), becomes acceptable in this light, just like many of his utterances that have been taken to indicate extreme egocentricism, now almost sound like expressions of love, coming from one who has to

accept his wife's substitute death and to live on without her because of the functions that fall to a man as the protector of his children.

However, this is not to say that Euripides gave his audience no reason to criticize Admetus. In this context, the emphasis he puts on Admetus' hospitality may be significant. Hospitality is of course an undisputed virtue, but the chorus and the servant who has to welcome Heracles, regard it as overdoing it when, in the present circumstances, Admetus does not give the more serious issue priority over the less serious one. But Admetus is a *ὅσιος ἀνήρ* (10, 605; cf. 1148), whose scrupulous respect for the prevailing *νόμοι* forbids him to refuse hospitality to a guest. He is the same thing with regard to the central issue of the play.

Euripides, however, made him such that the spectator may doubt whether he does not respect the *νόμοι* also for the very reason that they are to his advantage. Had he been a braver man, he would have been forgiven for articulating the negative consequences of Alcestis' sacrifice for himself. Yet, as, during and after Alcestis' death, he keeps talking as someone who feels 'deserted', one feels inclined to regard his character as the negative consequence of the moral system that put him in this situation. His regarding Pheres' attitude as a 'betrayal' (659) will hardly have surprised an Athenian audience, the less so because Pheres' resistance has the ring of egoism, and because Alcestis herself feels exactly the same (290). When, however, the servant tells us that Admetus *μὴ προδοῦναι λίσσεται, τἀμήχανα ζητῶν* (202), we start to doubt the qualities of this man. It can hardly be without significance that Euripides uses the words *μὴ προδοῦναι* for the son's duty towards his father (658), the father's duty towards his son (290), Alcestis' duty towards her husband (180), and Admetus' duty towards his dead wife (1058, 1096), and repeatedly puts these very words into Admetus' mouth when Alcestis is about to pass away (202, 250, 275). With this, Admetus takes the one step that may have made the audience aware of the possibility that his lamenting the consequences of the prevailing hierarchy may indicate that he is used to – and spoiled by – it being to his advantage. It then becomes hard to avoid the conclusion that Euripides' version of the events was inspired by his wish to question the traditional 'moral' of the fairy tale.

The servant's statement that Admetus will become fully aware of the consequences of his loss only after it has become a reality (145) – a statement that is echoed in Admetus' much-quoted *ἄρτι μανθάνω* (940) – points in the same direction, if, that is to say, one reads line

940 in its context. Admetus says that it may seem paradoxical, but that ultimately, Alcestis is luckier than he is. She is after all no longer subject to grief, she has found a glorious end to much misery. A sad existence, however, awaits him:

> ἐγὼ δ', ὃν οὐ χρῆν ζῆν, παρεὶς τὸ μόρσιμον
> λυπρὸν διάξω βίοτον· ἄρτι μανθάνω. (940-1)

His house will be lonely, he will live with children who have lost their mother, with servants who have lost their mistress. His enemies will taunt him:

> ἰδοῦ τὸν αἰσχρῶς ζῶνθ' ὃς οὐκ ἔτλη θανεῖν
> ἀλλ' ἣν ἔγημεν ἀντιδοὺς ἀψυχίᾳ
> πέφευγεν Ἅιδην· εἶτ' ἀνὴρ εἶναι δοκεῖ; (955-7)

What value does life hold for him,

> κακῶς κλύοντι καὶ κακῶς πεπραγότι; (961)

In brief: the moral system favours the man, but how much of a man will he be, if he accepts the favoured position, and how much of a privilege is this privilege? The insight Admetus gains, finds its basis, to a great extent, in his finally learning to ask these questions. With it he also gains a certain sympathy, albeit *post factum*, which enables us not to begrudge him the happy ending too much.

This may be the right place to point out that Alcestis herself is not only praised remarkably often in the play (I have counted 26 unmistakable passages), but that we are repeatedly and explicitly assured that no other appreciation is conceivable. Just as the spectators may have had their doubts about Admetus' οὐ γὰρ εὐτυχῶν ἀρνήσομαι (1158), passages such as

> ἀρίστη; τίς δ' ἐναντιώσεται;
> πῶς δ' οὐκ; (152)

and

> ἐσθλῆς γάρ, οὐδεὶς ἀντερεῖ, καὶ σώφρονος
> γυναικὸς ἡμάρτηκας. (615-6)

may also have made them wonder whether those were right indeed who saw the willingness to sacrifice herself as the ultimate realization of female virtues. Does one indeed need a wife who is willing to die for her husband, in order to see that it is beneficial to marry? (627-8)

5. For an interpretation that sees the ambivalent consequences of the norms and values embodied in the Alcestis motif as one of the main issues in the play, another argument can be put forward. The play as we have it, starts with a situation Admetus has Apollo to thank for. Apollo felt he was doing him a favour, but the consequences seem dubious. Nonetheless, all is well in the end, not because of Apollo, but because of *Heracles'* intervention. However one may want to answer the complicated question of exactly what elements in the play are traditional and what are of Euripides' own making, it seems highly probable that Heracles was introduced by Euripides.[18] "The only connection which Apollo has with the action of the play itself is that he first arranges the 'privilege' of substitute death; after a brief attempt to put off Thanatos, Apollo leaves the scene for good, and the final overcoming of death is effected in a manner quite alien to the mythical world which Apollo inhabits." This remark of Conacher's (328) seems correct and can be seen as one of the keys to the interpretation of the entire play.

Apollo represents the traditional hierarchy of values, in which it may be regarded natural to save the man's line by sacrificing the woman – who in this hierarchy is regarded as of secondary importance and as replaceable. Heracles is the perfect character to function as the opposite, as the 'ordinary' defender of the individual right to simple happiness.

He will cheer up the gloomy manservant (he finds him *σεμνός, πεφροντικὸς βλέπων, σκυθρωπός, στυγνός*). Death, he says, awaits us all and comes unexpectedly:

> *τὸ τῆς τύχης γὰρ ἀφανὲς οἷ προβήσεται.* (785)

Instead of drawing from this the lesson that one should practise *σωφροσύνη*, Heracles concludes from it:

> *εὔφραινε σαυτόν, πῖνε, τὸν καθ' ἡμέραν*
> *βίον λογίζου σόν, τὰ δ' ἄλλα τῆς τύχης* (789-90),

and further on:

> *ὄντας δὲ θνητοὺς θνητὰ καὶ φρονεῖν χρεών·*
> *ὡς τοῖς γε σεμνοῖς καὶ συνωφρυωμένοις*
> *ἅπασιν ἐστὶν ὥς γ' ἐμοὶ χρῆσθαι κριτῇ,*
> *οὐ βίος ἀληθῶς ὁ βίος, ἀλλὰ συμφορά.* (799-802)

---

[18] Cf. Conacher 327-33 and Ebeling 65-85.

A Heracles who says this kind of thing is more than just a burlesque *heros ex machina* who disentangles the situation. He is also the incarnated comment on the Apollonian wisdom with its implications about female *ἀρετή* and the exemplariness of a *ὅσιος ἀνήρ* like Admetus. He feels that Admetus should have given priority to mourning Alcestis over his duty of hospitality, and he finds a certain pleasure in confronting the mourning widower with a conflict between his solemn promises to Alcestis and a request to grant hospitality to the veiled woman who will turn out to be Alcestis herself. One may wonder if statements like

> *ἔχεις· φθόνος δὲ μὴ γένοιτό τις θεῶν* (1131),

and particularly

> *καὶ δίκαιος ὢν*
> *τὸ λοιπόν, Ἄδμητ', εὐσέβει περὶ ξένους* (1147-8),

put in this mouth do not have an undertone of irony. The irony of

> *γυναικὸς ἐσθλῆς ἤμπλακες· τίς ἀντερεῖ;* (1083)

must have been unmistakable to an audience who can still hear the echo of the many similar expressions in the course of the play. All these virtues may be virtues, but they need a Heracles to help manage their dubious consequences.

That Heracles would be a 'saviour' in the full and serious sense of the word – "dieses Ende dürfen wir voll nehmen und uns an ihm freuen" (Lesky 1963, 215) – seems an idea that misses the crux of the matter. Heracles is the counterpart of grim Thanatos, and Apollo's antagonist, not in the sense that he in all seriousness saves what Apollo spoiled, but in the sense that he turns Apollo's favour to Admetus into something dubious by embodying the opposite point of view and 'making it true' by means of an *ἀδύνατον*. In this light, the 'capers' are functional indeed. Heracles' arrival makes the impossible possible, and thus impresses on the audience the meaning Euripides attached to the 'fairy tale' of Alcestis.

In brief: the burlesque 'finale' both serves to underline the problematic aspects of the Alcestis story and enables the audience ostensibly to take matters lightheartedly: in the end, Heracles solves everything, doesn't he? Those who share the present author's opinion that the use of the *ἀδύνατον* is a pre-eminently 'comic' technique, could even characterize the play as a 'tragi-comedy', albeit in the special

sense of combining teaching and entertainment, by both pronouncing judgement on what one dislikes and creating the illusion that we can master the problematic aspects of reality by just creating a fictitious world, a Utòpia, where we can laugh them away.[19] If I am right in assuming that Euripides intended to lay bare what lies under the surface of the traditional story, this may have been the very reason why he did not write a full-blown tragedy – which should dramatize a conflict rather than teach a moral lesson – but a hybrid 'tragicomedy'. By assigning his *Alcestis* the place of a satyr play, he enabled himself to step outside the 'province' of a tragic poet in order to question the norms and values implied by the traditional Alcestis tale. One may doubt whether, for his 438 audience, the 'fairy tale' will ever have regained its romantic aura.*

[19] Cf. Sicking 1962, 19 ff. and 186-7.

* The above is an adapted version of a paper I presented at a conference on ancient drama, in Syracuse, in 1967. On that occasion, A. Garzya drew my attention to his 'Il motivo della salvazione nell' *Alcesti* di Euripide' (Garzya 1961). His interpretation of the play shows some striking similarities with mine, the most important of which can be summarized in the following quote: "Euripide nell' *Alcesti* ha voluto dimostrare la inconsistenza e la dubbia moralità di una concezione come della quale si fa garante Apollo nel dramma e secondo la quale non è conferito alla vita umana un valore assoluto, ma si istituisce una sorta di gerarchia fra individuo e individuo" (p. 9). With regard to other points, there are considerable differences. The most important ones seem to be the following: According to Garzya, (1) the *Alcestis* is characterized by the 'salvazione'. Apollo saves Admetus, who is again saved by Alcestis, because she brings him *πάθει μάθος*, while she in turn is saved by Heracles, together with Admetus. (2) The uncertainty about the interpretation of the play reflects a twofold reaction that Euripides consciously made possible: the 'man in the street' in Athens could keep regarding the fairy tale as a fairy tale ("il grosso pubblico poteva ... continuare a dormire i tranquilli suoi sonni"), but the elite had to note that certain issues were called into question here. Assuming such a dichotomy of the audience is, however, a risky business. If there was a division between those who were prepared to recognize the conflict and those who preferred not to, it will certainly not have coincided with a division along the lines of social status or intelligence. (3) "La scena della donna velata, che col suo tono di leggera ironia riconduce il dramma a certa atmosfera delle prime pagine, ha la duplice funzione di mettere alla prova la *ὁσιότης* di Admeto nei riguardi della memoria della morta e di evitare tra i due coniugi ritrovatisi ogni commento e ogni spiegazione, che non avrebbero potuto essere che estremamente imbarazzanti. L'importante è che Alcesti sia fisicamente di nuovo in vita e che Admeto, grazie a lei, sia stato donato alla vita dello spirito, dalla quale sembrava irrimediabilmente escluso" (p. 12).

JASON'S CASE

1. In his admirable essay on Euripides' *Medea*, K. von Fritz (1962, 343) observes that "die Interpretation des Konfliktes zwischen Iason und Medea bisher selten über die Gegenüberstellung der 'dämonischen, aber grossartigen Leidenschaftlichkeit' oder auch der 'barbarischen Wildheit' der Medea mit dem 'kleinlichen Egoismus' oder der 'Jämmerlichkeit' des Iason hinausgekommen ist." This diagnosis is indisputable, and seems to explain why, nowadays, with female actors the play is as popular as it is feared by their male counterparts. The consensus is greatest where the condemnation of the moral character of Jason is concerned, and the negative verdict seems to have hardened along with the considerable changes in norms and values that have taken place in the course of the 20th century. In Murray's view, Jason does not meet the standards of a 'gentleman' (41: "when Jason had to defend a shabby case, no gentleman cared to hear him; but Euripides insisted on his speaking"), but, twenty years later, in Page's introduction to his 1938 edition (xv-xvii), Medea's husband has become a hypocritical and insensitive criminal.

In Page's view, the only reason why one could feel any sympathy with Jason is that "his punishment is out of all proportion to his offence. (...) Medea's vengeance is so much more criminal than the crime which it was visiting. We are watching the conquest of evil not by virtue or divine justice but by greater evil." Thus, opposite a Jason who does not inspire any compassion until the very end of the play, Page places a Medea whose reactions are understandable for a long time, but who loses our sympathy once we understand that she will actually kill her children.

Page is not alone in his judgement of Medea, yet in the literature there are other, more balanced attempts to deal with the problem the modern spectator has of sympathizing with her to the bitter end. Next to the 'demonic passion' and 'barbarian wildness' mentioned by Von Fritz – the former one can try to romanticize, the latter provides an explanation by its very incomprehensibility[1] – there is a possibility

[1] Page's argument that Euripides intended Medea to embody "the qualities which the fifth-century Athenian believed to be characteristic of Orientals" fails to convince: his remarkable summing up of Medea's character (xvii: "inconsistency of tempera-

that Medea's behaviour is understandable, and therefore excusable, *exactly because* of Jason's contemptibility: what this man does is so monstrous that we are willing to condone Medea's reaction.

It could be that, nowadays, this last possibility will meet with most sympathy. What Murray, ten years before the introduction of comprehensive women's suffrage in England, could regard 'ungentlemanlike', after a period of emancipation of women meets with a different and much fiercer response, one that would sooner speak of despicable than of 'shabby', and would diagnose Medea's revenge as the extreme but by no means inconceivable reaction of a woman who, by crass, male delusions of superiority, has been driven into such a tight corner that the need for retaliation has become the one and only driving force of her life.

It seems doubtful however whether a response along these lines does justice to Euripides' play. *Medea* can only have been effective as a tragedy if Wilamowitz was at least partly right in assuming that most Athenians would have largely shared Jason's priorities. In other words: even if it was Euripides' intention to offer us a despicable Jason, the latter's behaviour must have been at least understandable to the audience for the play to be more than the case history of a heartless hypocrite who drives a female demon beyond the limits of sanity. In short: how should we read the play if we are to understand how, in 431, Euripides' audience recognized part of themselves in these two *dramatis personae*?

2. When we consider the prologue with these questions at the back of our minds, the nurse's monologue can be summarized as follows:

Medea's being struck by Eros (*ἔρωτι θυμὸν ἐκπλαγεῖσα*) has made her leave her native country (31), and follow Jason in his revenge on Pelias and his coming to Corinth. The citizens of Corinth have nothing against her (11-12) and she has stood by Jason (*πάντα ξυμφέρουσα*), thus securing the safety (*σωτηρία*) of her husband and children (13-15). Now things have changed: where *φιλία* ruled, *ἔχθρα* has taken over (16): Jason has abandoned his wife and children to marry

ment is the keynote of her character." xix: "unrestrained excess in lamentation, a readiness to fawn upon authority, the powers of magic, childish surprise at falsehoods and broken promises") seems to do less than justice to the Medea Euripides has presented. At 1339-40, Jason himself seeks to explain Medea's having brought herself to act as she did (ἔτλη τόδε) to the fact that she is not a Ἑλληνὶς γυνή. But this does not mean that, as Page has it, "Jason himself understood the truth in the end."

Creon's daughter (17-19), thereby robbing Medea of her worth (τιμή: 20, 33) and withholding from her the reciprocity (23) she is entitled to, and breaking the promises he gave her under oath (21-22). In the traumatic situation Medea finds herself in (28-29), she is impervious to any appeal of her φίλοι (29: one could think of her nurse and the women of Corinth), and regrets having left her father (φίλος, 31) and native country. Her attitude towards her children makes for concern: she is δεινή, and any ἐχθρός who confronts her, risks losing the battle (44-45).

In order to get a distinct idea of what is being said here and of the connotations the words spoken carry with them, the following considerations seem relevant:

(1) The adage "help your friends, harm your enemies" is a – if not the – basic principle by which inter-human relations in Athenian society were organized. The ideal Solon (13, 5-6 W.) had in mind is to be γλυκύς to one's φίλοι, πίκρος to one's ἐχθροί, so that the former will treat one with αἰδώς (i.e. without aggression), and the latter will fear one. In fact, Xenophon (*Mem.* 2.36) tells us that ἀρετή is defined by one *surpassing* one's φίλοι in εὖ ποιεῖν, one's enemies in κακῶς ποιεῖν. Hence, a person's ἀρετή increases in proportion to the degree in which he succeeds in this task.[2]

(2) The meaning of the terms φίλοι/φιλία and ἐχθροί/ἔχθρα does not correspond with that of our 'friends', 'loved ones', 'enemies', 'love' and 'hate'. As for ἐχθροί, Dover rightly observes that "few of us would expect to be involved for long in a relationship deserving the name of enmity, and a man who spoke of 'my enemies' could fairly be suspected of paranoia." This connotation is totally lacking in the world of the Athenians: a man automatically becomes another's ἐχθρός by harming him, which gives the other person the right, even the duty, to react accordingly. In a situation where the formula πρῶτος ἠδίκησεν applies, the inflictor of injustice must expect that his victim will repay him to the best of his ability, using any means at his disposal, and if possible, will multiply the damage.

A man without φίλοι lacks the minimum of protection he needs to survive; having too few or too few powerful φίλοι renders one extremely vulnerable. In one's circle of φίλοι there is a hierarchy, from one's parents, via relatives, friends and benefactors down to fellow citizens and fellow Greeks, with slaves and *barbaroi* holding the lowest positions.

---

[2] Further references and an illuminating discussion can be found in Dover 1974, 180.

(3) Dover – from whom I have taken this last observation (1974, 273) – qualifies this in a way that is as laconic as it is essential: "It may be observed that his [i.e. a man's] wife and children cannot easily be fitted into this hierarchy." As far as I can see, this shows exactly what is needed to put Medea's position and her choices into the right perspective.

A rephrasing of the words spoken by the nurse would then yield the following: as Jason's benefactress (rather than as his wife), Medea claims the right to be treated as *φίλη* by him, a right he himself has recognized by the promises he made to her under oath. His leaving her, therefore, is a case of *ἀδικία*: he deprives her of the *ἀμοιβή* she is entitled to, and in line with his own standards *ipso facto* turns into her *ἐχθρός*. She may be expected to draw the ultimate conclusion from this.

The remarkable thing about this is that a rule of behaviour regulating the relationship between men, threatens to be applied to a conflict between a man and a woman, a conflict the rule has not been tailored to. When Ariadne – who, in some respects, is comparable to Medea – had played her role in the heroic career of Theseus, he could leave her without mercy or compunction on Naxos, without thereby detracting from his reputation as a hero and a wise ruler: he remained the incarnation of the norms adhered to in Athens. Medea is indeed exceptional in that she appears not to be at all inclined to submit to such treatment.

What makes Medea's situation extraordinarily difficult is that, by marrying Jason, she not only has stepped out of the circle of her own *φίλοι* and into that of her husband, but also, on behalf of Jason, has forfeited the protection of her father and her brothers – in the Greek world the natural protectors of a woman who loses her marital state. This makes her completely dependent on Jason, the more so because as a non-Greek foreigner, she lacks any kind of legal status: nobody will feel obliged to protect her. She can only appeal (and repeatedly does in the course of the play) to the solidarity of her fellow women, of whom she can expect no more than that they refrain from hindering her in her actions (a.o. 823).

From the words of the nurse, we gather that Medea intends not to give in but to fight it out. There is *ἔχθρα* between Jason and her, and, since she is *δεινή*, we have to expect that she will harm him to the best of her ability.

The central concepts here are not translatable into modern English.

The 'love', 'hate', 'infidelity', 'betrayal' and 'insult' of our translations and commentaries are misleading – as every actor who has tried to put on stage a convincing Jason knows. The central issue is a man who abandons a woman who has every right to his protection, and thus deprives her of the existential basis and the prestige she is entitled to. Medea feels this gives her the right to seek the ultimate redress. The degree to which she is entitled to call herself Jason's *φίλη* determines the size and nature of the harm he inflicts upon himself. If, instead of doing due justice to her worth, he deserts her, he will be paid back in kind.

3. It is remarkable to us, as it was to Greek ears, that Medea does intend to vindicate her worth, her *τιμή*. If it is *ἀρετή* to surpass one's enemies in *κακῶς ποιεῖν*, then she claims for herself not just a safe existential basis, but *κλέος*. Viewed in this light, the nurse's concluding words (44-45) define under what sign the conflict will be fought out: *οὔτοι ῥαιδίως γε συμβαλὼν ἔχθραν τις αὐτῇ καλλίνικον οἴσεται*. A foreigner and a woman, Medea will go to the bitter end in applying the standards that govern Greek male behaviour. That the Xenophon quotation given above is an essential key indeed to our understanding of Medea's motives, becomes all the more clear in the course of the play.

Medea realizes that suicide would be a logical, maybe even desirable way out. A wish to die is about the first thing we hear her express (97, 145-147), and it appears in her first monologue as a rationally imaginable choice, both for her personally (226-227) and (in her summing up of the *condition féminine*) in general (243). She prefers, however, a different, less common solution, and the terms she uses to express herself about the alternative chosen cannot be misunderstood.

The first sign of a deviant assessment lies in her statement that a woman, unlike a man, cannot break away from a relationship with a *κακός* husband without losing *κλέος* (236: *οὐ γὰρ εὐκλεεῖς ἀπαλλαγαί*). In a society where the accomplishments of men become manifest because people praise them, and those of women because they are not being talked about, this choice of words is remarkable, the more so because the statement is followed by the most unusual comparison between the dangers of the battlefield and a woman's labour, and the, equally unusual, comparison between the disregard for death expected of heroes and the bloodthirstiness of a woman who has been struck in her social security (265-266). Seen against this background, retalia-

tion and compensation for the damage done to her (261) are longings that are as justifiable to her as they are threatening to Jason.

Once Creon has provided Medea with the minimal respite she needs, she weighs the various possibilities open to her to kill the bride, the father of the bride and her husband. The chance that she may be caught and killed if she does this directly and openly is one factor in her considerations, not because she fears death, but because it would give her enemies a chance to laugh at her (383): courage (*εὐψυχία*) is needed, because being laughed at (*γέλως*) by her enemies is the unacceptable alternative (404-406). Where she has nothing material left to lose, she is concerned about having her worth (*τιμή*) acknowledged. This motivation, which is perfectly normal for the male hero, but very unusual for a woman, is highlighted by the chorus' observation that in this upside-down world, *εὔκλεια* and *τιμή* fall to women, instead of *δυσκέλαδος φάμα* (415-416).

Even more significant tokens of the way in which and the motives with which Medea wishes to fight out the conflict, are to be found in her monologue after Aegeus has left. Her exclamation *νῦν καλλίνικοι τῶν ἐμῶν ἐχθρῶν, φίλαι, γενησόμεσθα* (765-766) refers to the ominous words of the nurse before the action proper started (45). The asylum Aegeus has promised, justifies the expectation that she will prove able to settle the score with her enemies (767).

Medea tells the chorus how the *τίσις* will take place, and also (explicitly for the first time) that she means to kill her children[3] and then leave Corinth. Her motives: only then can she settle her score with Jason (802) without being laughed at by her enemies (797: *οὐ γὰρ γελᾶσθαι τλητὸν ἐξ ἐχθρῶν*). If she can succeed in killing Jason's children and in destroying his hopes of new offspring with his new bride, no one will call her inferior or weak. She will meet the standards of *ἀρετή* by being *βαρεῖα ἐχθροῖς καὶ φίλοισιν εὐμενής· τῶν γὰρ*

[3] There is no indication that Euripides wanted his audience to make its own conjectures about the precise moment Medea resolves to kill Jason's children. The menace that she will do so is there from line 36-7 onwards (*στυγεῖ δὲ παῖδας οὐδ' ὁρῶσ' εὐφραίνεται. δέδοικα δ' αὐτὴν μή τι βουλεύσῃ νέον*, i.e. unheard of), and the possibility is hinted at by Medea herself at 113-5 (*ὦ κατάρατοι παῖδες ὄλοισθε στυγερᾶς ματρὸς σὺν πατρὶ καὶ πᾶς δόμος ἔρροι*, with the Nurse's response: *οἴμοι, τέκνα, μή τι πάθηθ' ὡς ὑπεραλγῶ*) and is implied in what Medea says to the chorus at 260-2: *ἤν μοι πόρος τις μηχανή τ' ἐξευρεθῇ πόσιν δίκην τῶνδ' ἀντιτείσασθαι κακῶν, σιγᾶν*. The very fact that she informs the chorus about it only after Aegeus has left, seems calculated to enhance the audience's awareness that she is carrying out a deliberate strategy.

τοιούτων εὐκλεέστατος βίος (810; cp. the quotations from Solon and Xenophon above).

This last line of the monologue takes away any doubt the audience may still have: this woman will apply the conventional moral without compromise or mercy to a situation it does not provide for. Where the prevailing ethical system shows a vacuum, she refuses to conform by way of going into exile or by committing suicide, and claims a place for herself in the hierarchy of Jason's *φίλοι*. The fact that she *κακῶς πάσχει* through the man who owes everything to her, gives her the right to do this (815). The answer to the question whether she will actually prove capable of killing her children can, at this stage, be expressed in one single sentence: yes, because it is the maximum in damage she can do to Jason (817). Why require moderation from women (819), when it is regarded a vice in men?

3.1. It seems to me that the problem of the Aegeus scene may also be solved from this perspective. Of course his promise to grant her asylum has the practical function of freeing the way for Medea to take her revenge: without a safe place to go to, she will be the defenceless victim of the merciless punishment meeted out to by Jason and the Corinthians. But there is more to it: to Euripides' audience Aegeus represented the Athenian tradition of granting asylum to *ἠδικημένοι*, which is so loudly praised in the *ἐπιτάφιοι* and in Euripides' *Supplices*. The child promised to Aegeus by the oracle is no other than Theseus, who was the originator and permanent embodiment of this tradition. The fact that it is *Theseus' father* who offers to protect Medea from her enemies is unmistakably symbolic. He bases his offer on the consideration that Jason *ἀδικεῖ οὐδὲν παθών* (692) and is not *πιστός* to his *φίλοι* (698). This is *αἴσχιστον* and makes Medea *ἄτιμος* (695-696). Aegeus, therefore, is *δίκαιος*, when he acts as her *πρόξενος* (724).

Medea needs him to confirm his promise under oath, because, otherwise, he might feel obliged to hand her over to his fellow Greeks – who, in the hierarchy of his *φίλοι*, take precedence over Medea (738, 744). His formal declaration that it would be *δυσσέβεια* to do that (755), therefore, is absolutely crucial. When, at his departure, the chorus calls him a *γενναῖος ἀνήρ*, this implies that they recognize both Medea's position as the victim of injustice and her right to protection from her enemies.

The much-praised 'ode to Athens' that follows Aegeus' exit is mainly an introduction to the pressing question that is raised by Aegeus' promise. Can the beloved 'cradle of civilization' indeed offer

asylum to a παιδολέτειρα (849)? After all, Aegeus does not know about Medea's intention to kill her children, and thus the question remains unanswered whether her application of the norms from which Jason operates is acceptable. It would seem to me that Euripides intended the chorus' moving expression of love and admiration for Athens to serve the purpose of highlighting the ethical dilemma at issue here: if love for Athens implies that one underwrites the norms that govern Athenian society, and those norms lead to *these* consequences, what should be the audience's conclusion?[4]

4. An interpretation of *Medea* along these lines saves us from the necessity to regard Jason as a hypocritical egoist: he is no more (nor less) than a credible representative of the social system in which there is no satisfactory place for Medea. According to him, she should have reconciled herself to the κρεισσόνων βουλεύματα (449) in order to keep hearth and home (448-449). She can count on him: he will remain her φίλος as long and as much as she will let him (459) and he will keep protecting her. But if she perseveres in resisting, and in cursing those who just happen to be more powerful than she is (and he himself), he cannot help her either: raising his own status in the hierarchy described above has to take priority, especially since the improvement of his position will also be to the benefit of her children.

In her reply, Medea measures Jason by a standard used by men to measure men. It is θράσος and εὐτολμία (469) to look one's enemies in the eye (470: ἐναντίον βλέπειν), but towards φίλοι whom one has treated κακῶς, such behaviour is the opposite of what becomes a man (466: ἀνανδρία); Jason betrays a lack of αἰδώς (472) in that he does not shun to look in the face the woman he has wronged. Jason is not so much a 'shameless coward' as one who shows 'audacity' at a time when none is needed, and towards someone who does not require this kind of misplaced 'courage', but merely the protection she is entitled to.

After that, Medea takes stock mercilessly. She has saved Jason's life at the cost of her own social security (483, 503: προδοῦσα); in return,

[4] It would seem to me that Sophocles' famous 'Ode to Colonus' (*Oedipus Coloneus* 668 ff.) is comparable: it is not so much inspired by the old Sophocles' love for his own birthplace as by the author's wish to highlight the moral and religious issues that confront those who are prepared to allow Oedipus to die and be buried on their territory. On the very place that is haunted by the Furies, the nightingale will lament Oedipus, and the flowers it grows will deck his grave.

he has abandoned her (489: προύδωκας). The very fact that, for his sake, she has violated the norms towards her φίλοι (587-588: οὓς δέ μ' οὐκ ἐχρῆν κακῶς δρᾶν, σοὶ χάριν φέρουσα πολεμίους ἔχω) obliges him to keep the promises he made her. Clearly put: she could demand from him that he does for her what she did for him, and therefore she does not have to accept *a fortiori* that he leaves her in order to improve his status in Corinth – which offers the Greek male he is more security than her anyway. Her adding that the banishment of his wife and children will bring dishonour to the new husband of Creon's daughter (514: ὄνειδος τῷ νεωστὶ νυμφίῳ) reveals how much she has made Jason's hierarchy of norms into her own. The chorus' comment is short but to the point: this is the result when φίλοι start to fight φίλοι.

Jason gives the answer we could expect. Measured by his standards, Medea's situation has improved and the new marriage will improve her position even further. His turning the fact of her having gained access to the Greek world and its civilized norms into a plus (537-538) may be regarded a grim example of tragic irony – coming from the mouth of the man who will subsequently have to experience what it means to have these very norms applied by this woman.

The fact that under these norms, the improvement of a man's status takes precedence over a woman's interest, becomes cruelly apparent when Jason concludes by wishing that human life could continue *without women*. The thought that he could have treated Medea as his equal by at least trying to convince her that he has a case (586), does not even enter his mind. In his eyes, she is the one who is turning the world upside down by taking happiness for unhappiness (602), and by clinging to marriage and sex as the highest good (568). He on his part will continue to do his duty as long as she will let him.

What this confrontation clearly shows us is that Medea, in Jason's eyes, has to reconcile herself to that which will contribute to his *relative* advancement: in his frame of reference, comparing her rights to his is simply not to the point. It is, however, precisely that which Medea claims for herself. She derives from it the right to fight him mercilessly, in line with the standards he himself advocates.

4.1. One advantage of this approach is that it saves us from such concepts as 'passionate' and 'wild' and thus eliminates the question how to understand Medea's cunning and presence of mind, with which she manipulates first Creon and then Jason. The Medea Euripides puts on stage knows from the very first time she speaks what she wants and

why. She is not in the least driven by blind passion or by the attachment of a not-so-young woman to the bed of the man who wants to trade her for a rival. On the contrary: her moment of fatal blinding lies in the past, when she followed Jason *ἔρωτι θυμὸν ἐκπλαγεῖσα*. Now she is fully capable of calculating the effects of her actions.

That she accomplishes her goal by misleading both Creon and Jason is justified by the same standards that drive her to take this route. Those who lack the physical power to triumph over their *ἐχθροί*, have to resort to their ingenuity (*σοφία*). One may recall Aeschylus' characterization of Clytaemnestra: a *γυναικὸς ἀνδρόβουλον κέαρ* (*Ag.* 11) also characterizes Medea. What is incomprehensible to Jason, to her is not *ἀβουλία* (cf. 882, 893) but quite the opposite.

The dialogue in which Medea misleads Jason (869-975) is one of the most brilliant devices in dramatic literature. One can hardly imagine a more effective way to make visible that Jason's standards result in an upside-down and unacceptable world for the woman who is their victim. By making Medea *play* the woman Jason wants her to *be*, Euripides forcefully impresses on his audience the utter impossibility of her complying with what is expected of her. Her commitment to Jason in the past now serves as a reason to excuse her exaggerated fierceness (871). She now realizes that Jason wanted to look after her interests, accuses herself of *ἀβουλία* and misplaced indignation (882-883) and acknowledges that the wisest thing to do would be to support him in his efforts.

One is reminded of Ajax' famous monologue in Sophocles' play (646 ff.): there too, the terms Ajax uses to express his pseudo-submittal to the norms of his environment make clear both the fact that and the reason why he of all people cannot conform to these norms.[5] By making those around him misunderstand him to the point of being overjoyed that he has 'changed his mind', Sophocles makes us realize the unbridgeable distance that separates him from the others. Something similar happens here: the gap between Medea and Jason can be felt in the relief with which Jason welcomes her better-late-than-never 'coming to her senses': now he can fulfil his duties to his children and he can hope that they will defend him against his *ἐχθροί* in the future (921).

[5] The connection between a number of characteristics of Medea and those of Sophocles' heroes has also been made by Knox (1977), albeit with slightly different emphases.

4.2. It testifies to Euripides' genius as a dramatist that he choses *this* moment to give voice to Medea's first doubts. When Jason speaks about her children, tears are running down her face (922). Instead of making her stop worrying (*θάρσει* he says), his 'understanding' of her tearfulness and his reassurance that, with him, the children's well-being will be in good hands, gives her the *θράσος* to ask him to plead with his new wife to exclude her children from her banishment. She herself will contribute by offering his bride the wedding apparel that was intended for Helios' offspring.

Medea's emotion at the mentioning of her children seems momentarily to affect her determination. Maybe it is better after all to leave them in Corinth? That this has become unthinkable does not get through to Jason: of course he is willing to make such a plea, and thus, unintentionally and unwittingly, he becomes the instrument in Medea's plan of revenge, which requires a visit of the children to Jason's bride.

Jason's arrogant suggestion that Medea may keep her possessions because his prestige will suffice without additional gifts, is an insult which she eloquently leaves unanswered. She limits herself to the statement that she would give anything for her children. It is important that the princess accepts the gifts with her own hands (972-973) if Medea is to accomplish *ὧν ἐρᾷ τυχεῖν*. So precisely that which Jason deems superfluous to secure safety for her children in Corinth – which she as a mother would prefer – is what opens the way for her revenge.

Medea's famous monologue articulates the doubts that first became manifest in her meeting with Jason. In lines 1019-1039 she speaks as if she truly meant the request she made to Jason: her children will live in Corinth, and she herself will go into lonely exile. *Τί προσγελᾶτε τὸν πανύστατον γέλων;* (1041) suggests that she takes her children's death into account, a thought she subsequently rejects (1044: *χαιρέτω βουλεύματα*): she will (1045) take them into exile with her, because the grief she has in mind for Jason will strike her twice as hard as him. What finally takes away her doubt is the thought of the mockery of her enemies if she were to leave them unpunished: *καίτοι τί πάσχω; βούλομαι γέλωτ' ὀφλεῖν / ἐχθροὺς μεθεῖσα τοὺς ἐμοὺς ἀζημίους*; (1049-1050). If anywhere, it is here that the values from which Medea wants to operate become apparent. The shame that would be visited upon her if she were to kill Jason's bride but not his children, and thus would not demand the *full* price for what he has done to her,

motivates her more than ever. She would no longer understand herself (1049: καίτοι τί πάσχω;) if she were to act otherwise.[6]

5. The first reaction of the chorus to the messenger's report of the death of Creon and his daughter subscribes to what Medea has done so far: the women consider it ἐνδίκως that Jason is struck by these κακά (1232). Medea herself expresses her feelings of triumph before the messenger tells his story (1127-1128, 1135), so that we hear what the messenger has to say through the ears of Medea, whose insulted feelings the cruel death of the princess and her father is supposed to compensate. Then she has to confront taking the last step, which is now as inevitable as it is abhorrent (1243). What makes her persevere, is the thought that others could beat her to it: πάντως σφ' ἀνάγκη κατθανεῖν· ἐπεὶ δὲ χρή, ἡμεῖς κτενοῦμεν οἵπερ ἐξεφύσαμεν (1240-1241). It would be cowardice to let motherly feelings take over from courage (1246). So again, no demonic passion or blinding by hatred. The last psychological barrier is eliminated by the thought that the children must die anyway. What she – with the express consent of the chorus – has done so far makes the last step inevitable and even desirable: she must prevent her children from being killed by the Corinthians δυσμενεστέρᾳ χερί (1239).

When Jason appears to protect his children from the revenge of the Corinthians (1304), he is too late in a double sense. His venomous recapitulation of what has happened offers little news. In his eyes, the punishment for what Medea has done to her father and brother is now being visited on him (1333). He married a barbarian monster: no Greek woman would εὐνῆς ἕκατι καὶ λέχους have gone as far as Medea who, due to her ἀγριωτέρα φύσις (1343), does not fit in a civilized world. Yet her θράσος makes her inaccessible to his reproaches and abuse.

Medea's justification remains unchanged. Jason could not and should not have expected that she would accept his depriving her of

[6] The reader will have noticed that I have left the disputed verses 1056-1080 out of consideration. The arguments against their authenticity have been collected by Reeve (1972). The most important difficulties seem to be the following: 1. The children, who are sent away in 1053, are back in 1069 ff.; 2. in 1044 and 1048, the term βουλεύματα refers to Medea's intention to kill her children; in 1079, however, she concludes that her θυμός (which tells her to kill the children) is stronger than her βουλεύματα, with which she now must mean her rational consideration that this is not permitted. Together with the repeated and confusing change of perspective (see Reeve's article), this suggests that the authenticity of the whole passage is doubtful. What parts were written by Euripides and what parts were not, can no longer be determined.

what she was entitled to, and expose herself to his mockery just for the sake of providing him a τερπνὸς βίος (1355). She is willing to pay the price of her grief in return for the certainty that he will not be able to laugh at her (1362: ἢν σὺ μὴ 'γγελᾷς). She has actually caused him the greatest grief possible, and is invulnerable to his bitter *words*. The gods know ὅστις ἦρξε πημονῆς (1372). He must even be denied the burial of his children, because she cannot allow the risk of their being exposed to insults from her enemies (1380).

6. The conclusion has to be that, *mutatis mutandis*, Jason's miscalculation (Aristotle might have called it ἁμαρτία) is comparable to what Agamemnon did to Achilles: he has sorely underestimated his competitor's power to harm him. Just as Theseus needed Ariadne, so Jason needed the support of Medea, and it was a fatal mistake to think he could repudiate her without having to pay the price. It is, however, clear that he could hardly have acted in any other way. He has unwittingly caused the death of his children and his own downfall, precisely because he could not possibly foresee that Medea would refuse to conform to the position reserved for her in his hierarchy, thereby making the system explode and causing the destruction of those it meant to keep alive.

The effect of Medea's appearance as a kind of *deus ex machina* in Helios' chariot (which, by the way, presents the dramatic opportunity for a last confrontation with Jason) "must have been to bring home to the audience the conviction that Medea is not merely an individual woman wronged and revengeful; she is, at the end, a figure which personifies something permanent and powerful in the human situation, (...) some kind of irresistible power (...) as dangerous as it is universal." (Knox 1977, 209) It does not mean that Euripides would have wanted to advocate that the Athenian norms and values be changed in order to prevent such events from happening. His Medea, just like Aphrodite and Artemis in the *Hippolytus* and Dionysos in the *Bacchae*, does not embody an ethical principle, but an unavoidable characteristic of the human situation as Euripides saw it. It seems to have been part of the myth[7] that Medea left for Athens to marry Aegeus (1384-1385), but there is no suggestion that the dilemma formulated by the

---

[7] For a discussion of the question what the myth could have looked like before Euripides chose it as the starting point for this play, cf. the first part of Von Fritz' essay, as well as the introduction to Page's commentary.

chorus after Aegeus' departure could be easily solved. Nor is there any indication that Euripides wanted his audience to condemn Jason, whose tragic and deplorable situation, on the contrary, is given full emphasis in the final scene. Nor is *Medea* a plea for the emancipation of women: "Even though tradition has it that speeches from the *Medea* (in the translation of Gilbert Murray) were read aloud at suffragette meetings (a careful selection, no doubt), it is not likely that Sylvia Pankhurst would have admitted Medea to membership in the League." (Knox 211) Until the very last, the play remains the representation of a tragic conflict which leads to the sorry destruction of those who fight it out. In 431 BC, the powerless and destroyed Jason must have incited as much ἔλεος as the δυστυχὴς γυνή (1250) Medea does.

ARISTOPHANES LAETUS?

In der Beurteilung des sogenannten Nikiasfriedens gehen die modernen Historiker mehr oder weniger weit auseinander. Erkennt man die Notwendigkeit des unter der Leitung von Perikles angefangenen Krieges an, und hält man die Grundsätze der perikleischen Politik und Taktik für richtig, so wird man den Frieden im wesentlichen positiv werten, auf jeden Fall darin einen Erfolg Athens sehen: "das Ziel, für das einst Perikles in den Krieg gezogen war, die Behauptung des Besitzstandes, war erreicht." (Bengtson 219) G. de Sanctis (93) bedauert den Frieden: er macht den 'Pazifisten' den Vorwurf, sie hätten die Gelegenheit, Sparta endgültig aufs Haupt zu schlagen, ungenützt gelassen. Etwas anders urteilt J.B. Bury (456), der eine Ehrenrettung Kleons unternimmt: "if we admit the justification of the imperial policy of Pericles, then the policy of vigorous action advocated by Cleon was abundantly justified." Nach ihm ist die Diplomatie des Nikias völlig gescheitert, der Friede somit vom Anfang an ein fauler Friede: hätte man nur die Politik Kleons loyal unterstützt, so wäre ein weit günstiger, d.h. ein für das 'empire' vorteilhafter Friede erreichbar gewesen.

K.J. Beloch (ii.1, 342) sah, wie seine negative Beurteilung der perikleischen Politik erwarten läßt, zwar einen moralischen Erfolg Athens, betont jedoch eindringlich die Schattenseiten eines Abkommens in diesem Augenblick: "Athen hat nicht den geringsten Machtzuwachs erlangt. Wohl aber war der Schatz (...) aufgezehrt worden; die Bürgerschaft war (...) mehr als dezimiert worden, das Land (...) zur Wüste geworden. Das Machtverhältnis hatte sich sehr wesentlich zu ungunsten Athens verschoben." Beloch sieht der Zukunft Athens mit Kummer entgegen.

Versucht man, sich hineinzudenken in einen Zeitgenossen, der (wie Beloch) der Meinung war, Perikles habe den Krieg aus persönlichen Gründen zum Ausbruch gebracht, nur weil Rücksichten der inneren Politik ihn dazu bewegten;[1] in einen der an die Vorteile einer imperialistischen Politik für Athen nicht unbedingt glauben konnte, der die außerordentlich harten Folgen einer solchen Politik nicht vergessen konnte und die altbewährten guten Eigenschaften der Athener

---

[1] Vgl. Ar. *Ach.* 530 ff., *Pax* 606.

Bürgerschaft zufolge des Krieges verschwinden sah; was soll ein solcher Mann vom Nikiasfrieden halten?

Die Friedenspartei war im Stande durchzudringen,[2] weil Kleon auf dem Felde bei Amphipolis geblieben war, nachdem die Kriegspartei bereits vorher durch Mißerfolge an Boden verloren hatte. Auch den Spartanern verlief der Krieg anders als sie gerechnet hatten. Sie trauerten um Brasidas, befürchteten Schwierigkeiten von Seiten der Heiloten, vom Erbfeinde Argos, und ersehnten die Rückgabe der Gefangenen von Sphakteria. Wie sehr man in Sparta friedensbereit war, läßt sich u.a. aus der Bereitschaft, die Interessen der Bündner weitgehend zu negieren, entnehmen. Der Friede bedeutet somit keineswegs, man hätte mit einer kritischen Würdigung der Kriegsziele auch nur angefangen: der Konfliktstoff lag nach wie vor bereit. Wie wenig tief der Friedenswille saß, sollte sich ja bald herausstellen: wenige Verschiebungen zu ungunsten Spartas genügten um der Friedenspartei den Wind wieder wegzufangen. Die Gegner waren fähig noch gewillt, einander samt ihrer Macht anzuerkennen; der Vertrag bedeutete höchstens die formelle Anerkennung des Attischen Reiches durch den Gegner.

Wer geneigt war, diesen Tatsachen eine gewisse Bedeutung beizumessen, wer den bisher geforderten Opfern angesichts der von den leitenden Politikern gesteckten Zielen abgeneigt war, konnte sich über diesen Frieden nicht richtig freuen, wohl am wenigsten solange die schwierigen Verhandlungen noch nicht zum Abschluß gelangt waren: es bedurfte nicht umsonst eines 'Ultimatums' von spartanischer Seite ehe der Widerstand der 'Radikalen' in der athenischen Ekklesia zum Schweigen gebracht werden konnte. Eine *κοινὴ εἰρήνη* in irgendwelchem Sinne war in den ersten Monaten des Jahres 421 wirklich nicht zu erwarten, wurde auch nach den Dionysien dieses Jahres nicht erreicht.

Angesichts solcher Erwägungen kann es befremden, daß der *Friede* des Aristophanes von so vielen Interpreten, Historikern so gut wie Philologen, in genau derselben Weise beurteilt worden ist, wie die folgenden Zitate augenfällig machen dürften:

Van Leeuwen (iv): "Laetus et hilarus in scena adspicitur Trygaeus; *laetum* sentimus *ipsum Aristophanem* (meine Kurs.), qui de bello triumphare sibi visus est et almae Deae reditum sollemni sacrificio (...) in scena celebravit."

[2] Vgl. Thuc. V.14.

M. Croiset (iii, 569): "On tient enfin la paix tant désirée, on va en jouir, elle n'a plus d'adversaires sérieux; il ne reste au poète qu'à la célébrer."

J. Geffcken (i, 246): "(...) das in freudigster Schnelle hingeworfene neue Drama des Dichters: den *Frieden* (...)."

G. Norwood (224): "Aristophanes (...) with the majority for once on his side, contents himself with singing a Paean of reconciliation."

G. Murray (1933, 60): "The cause for which the poet pleads was already won when the play was produced."

O. Weinreich (I, p. C): "Es kann nicht anders sein, als daß das Glück des in sicherer Aussicht stehenden Friedens den Dichter bei der Arbeit begleitete."

Ed. Meyer (iv, 416): "(...) eben in dem Moment, wo der Vertrag abgeschlossen wurde, führte Aristophanes in seinem *Frieden* dem attischen Demos den Jubel des Landvolks vor Augen, daß das Ziel nun endlich erreicht war, für das man so lange und mit so großen Opfern gekampft hatte."

G. Glotz (ii, 656): "Toutes les bouches répétaient des chants en l'honneur de la paix, ceux qu'Euripide avait composés (...), celui que le Trygée d'Aristophane venait d'entonner à la veille de l'événement décisif."

Etwas vorsichtiger J.B. Bury (456-7): "The peace was celebrated by a play of Aristophanes, which admirably expresses the exultant joy then felt at Athens, but carefully avoids the suggestion of any noble sentiment that may have quickened the poet's delight in the accomplishment of the policy he had advocated. So Cleon's friends might have said; but we judge Aristophanes unfairly, if we misapprehend the comic poet's function. Comedy did not guide public opinion, but rather echoed it; comedy set up no exalted idea or high standard of action."

Bei solcher Einstimmigkeit kommen die wenigen, ziemlich leisen Gegenstimmen[3] kaum zu Worte. Trotzdem ist, soweit ich sehen kann, nicht nur die Freude, die Aristophanes an diesem Frieden gefunden haben soll, in der oben angedeuteten Weise problematisch; auch das Stück selber ist mit der Ansicht, der Dichter wolle nur den endlich erreichten Frieden feiern, kaum in Einklang.

Eupolis hat im Jahre 421 mit seinen *Schmeichlern* – allem Anschein nach eine unpolitische Komödie – den ersten Preis davongetragen;

---

[3] S. Anm. 5.

dritter wurde Leukon mit seinen *Φράτερες*, kaum ein seriöser Rivale, der erst 410 seinen ersten Sieg errungen hat. Sein Stück war gegen Hyperbolos gerichtet. Aristophanes bekam den zweiten Preis. Das kam bei der Aktualität des von ihm gewählten Themas einem Mißerfolge gleich, und dürfte bedeuten, daß Aristophanes eben nicht der allgemeinen Freude Ausdruck verliehen hat. Auf jeden Fall ist die Weise in der man sich dieses Preisrichterurteil zu erklären versucht hat, etwas gezwungen, und wenigstens stark subjektiv. Nach J. Geffcken (i, 247) zeigt das Stück einen gewissen Mangel an echt dramatischem Leben: "ein großes, lange erwartetes Ereignis hat, endlich Wirklichkeit geworden, den poetischen Ausdruck und die dichterische Darstellung unter der eigenen Wucht erdrückt." Die meisten Interpreten dürften sich einigen können auf die Worte G. Murrays: "The poet is no longer fighting against odds, with his back against a wall; hence comes a certain flatness and lack of fire." Die wenigsten werden mit G. Norwood (235) reden von "a brilliant and delightful play. Nowhere, even in the *Birds*, does the poet show greater ease: every kind of charm radiates from him almost without effort."

Es hat jedoch keinen Zweck, zu versuchen auf Grund von subjektiven Geschmacksurteilen weiterzukommen. Ich möchte vielmehr darauf hinweisen, daß das Stück weit mehr Aggresivität in sich hat als die meisten Interpreten einzuräumen gewillt sind. Die Fahrt des Trygaios geht ja schließlich *εὐθὺ τοῦ Διός* (68): ein Unternehmen, für das Lesky's Formulierung (1963, 476) "Zeus nach seiner Absicht mit den kriegsgeplagten Hellenen fragen" entschieden zu schwach ist: 'Zeus zur Rechenschaft ziehen' wäre wohl richtiger. Daß die Fahrt auf einem Mistkäfer stattfindet, kann daran wenig ändern: die Bellerophontes-Reminiszenzen verstärken den Eindruck, Trygaios bewege sich hart an der Grenze der Hybris. Die Olympier trifft er im Himmel nicht an: *φροῦδοι γάρ* (197), *Ἕλλησιν ὀργισθέντες* (204). Das gesellt sich zu den schärfsten Ausfällen die Aristophanes gegen die Götter der Polisgemeinschaft gemacht hat.[4] Die Enttäuschung über das Versagen der Götter führt ihn sozusagen regelrecht zur Vergöttlichung der Eirene, zu einer äußerst lebendigen Personifikation der Friedensgöttin – volle fünfzig Jahre vor dem 371 eingesetzten Kulte. Man versteht nicht, daß Nilsson, der so selten wirklich wichtiges außer Acht gelassen hat, diese Eirene weder bei seiner Besprechung der aristophaneischen Religiosität (I, 779 ff.) noch in seinem den "abstrakten Gott-

[4] Vgl. *Av.* 580 ff., 1202 ff.

heiten" gewidmeten Abschnitte (*ib.* 812ff.) erwähnt hat. Die Personifikation ließe sich wohl am einfachsten verstehen, indem man die "Kritik an dem Gebaren der olympischen Götter und an iher Schicksalslenkung", die Nilsson (*ib.* 814) zu den Ursachen solcher Personifikationen rechnet, auch hier ziemlich ernst nimmt.

Die Weise in der Kleon wenige Monate nach seinem Tode von dem Dichter mitgenommen wird, läßt uns erraten, daß seine 'Nachfolger', als der Dichter das Stück konzipierte, bei weitem nicht zum Schweigen gebracht waren: die derben Invektiven (752-60) – bekanntlich zum Teile eine Wiederholung von *Wespen* 1030-37 – sind sonst schlechthin unverständlich. Die Bemerkung von Platnauer in seinem Kommentar z.St. – "it may well be that Aristophanes, having secured a success with the passage in the *Wasps*, repeats it with modifications here" – erscheint mir dem Umstand, daß Kleon inzwischen gefallen war, ungenügend Rechnung zu tragen.

Ein Problem praktischer Art ist gegeben mit der Tatsache, daß der Dichter, falls die oben zitierten Interpreten Recht hätten, das Stück tatsächlich "in freudigster Schnelle" hingeworfen haben würde. Wenn er, was an sich mehr auf der Hand liegt, die Ausarbeitung bereits im Anfang des Jahres angefangen hatte, konnte er keineswegs sicher sein, daß sein Stück "eine Art von Festspiel für den Friedensfeier werden würde." (so W. Schmid, I, iv, 192) Auffälligerweise wird es in der ersten und dritten Hypothesis auch nicht als Festspiel betrachtet: I: *προτρέπων τὰς πόλεις καταθέσθαι μὲν τὴν πρὸς αὑτὰς φιλονεικίαν, ὁμόνοιαν δὲ καὶ εἰρήνην ἀντὶ τῆς πρότερον ἔχθρας ἑλέσθαι,* und III: *συμβουλεύει Ἀθηναίοις σπείσασθαι πρὸς Λακεδαιμονίους καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους Ἕλληνας.*

Eine vergleichbare Ansicht vertritt H. van Daele (88): "il n'est pas impossible que sa pièce ait eu quelque influence sur l'issue heureuse des pourparlers." Das erscheint mir jedoch faktisch nicht recht möglich. Nach Thukydides (V.20) wurde der Friede "am Ende des Winters mit dem Frühling", *ἐκ τῶν Διονυσίων εὐθύς*, geschlossen. "The audience coming out from seeing this comedy were expecting the news; it came within a few days." (Murray 1933, 61)

Bei einer richtigen Einschätzung der von Aristophanes erstrebten Zwecke wird man es zudem vermeiden, allzuviel von tatsächlicher Beeinflussung der Ereignisse zu reden. Wie ich an anderer Stelle (1962, 18ff.) zu zeigen versucht habe, wäre es wohl richtiger, die Mehrzahl der aristophaneischen Komödien zu interpretieren als *fiktive* Lösungen einer problematischen oder sogar drohenden Sachlage.

Mindestens neun von den elf uns überlieferten Komödien stellen ein *ἀδύνατον* dar; es wäre sehr schön wenn die Probleme Athens in der von Aristophanes zu vorübergehender Bühnenwirklichkeit gemachten Weise gelöst werden könnten: die Illusion, die Quadratur des Kreises dürfte im Handumdrehen gelingen, die Welt der Poesie, des Traumes, wäre mit der Wirklichkeit identisch, schenkt dem Publikum für wenige Stunden das Gefühl, mächtig zu sein, der Schwierigkeiten mühelos Herr werden zu können. Allein: es gibt keinen Wursthändler, der Kleon an Niederträchtigkeit übertreffen und den alten Herrn Demos jungkochen könnte; die Richterleidenschaft eines Philokleon läßt sich nicht mit der Einrichtung eines Privatgerichts abspeisen usw.

Genau so gibt es in der Wirklichkeit keinen Trygaios, kann es keinen Frieden geben, der, vom attischen Landvolke gestiftet und nur von Orakeldeutern und Kriegsverdienern hintertrieben, aller *πολυπραγμοσύνη* ein Ende machen könnte. Es ist für ein richtiges Verständnis des Stückes sehr wichtig, die Unterschiede zwischen dem historischen Nikiasfrieden und dem dank der Aktivität des Trygaios gestifteten Bühnenfrieden im Auge zu behalten. Gerade die panhellenische Gesinnung die das Stück atmet, fehlte den Verhändlern und ist dem Vertrage nicht zu entnehmen. Trygaios redet – anders als Dikaiopolis es getan hatte – fortwährend von Hellas und Hellenen: sein Wagnis ist gemeint *ὑπὲρ Ἑλλήνων πάντων* (93). *Ἔσωσα τοὺς Ἕλληνας, ὥστ' ἐν τοῖς ἀγροῖς ἅπαντας ὄντας ἀσφαλῶς βινεῖν τε καὶ καθεύδειν* (868) sagt er nach seiner Rückkehr auf Erden; (...) *ἄθρει οἷον πρὸς ἀλλήλας λαλοῦσιν αἱ πόλεις διαλλαγεῖσαι καὶ γελῶσιν ἄσμεναι* (538 f.) – eine Perspektive, die der Friede faktisch nicht geboten hat: man erinnere sich nur an die Haltung von Megara, Böotien und Korinth. Auf der Bühne wird sie ja auch nicht von den *Πανέλληνες* selber erfüllt, sondern vom attischen Landvolk, das dem Widerstande, der Faulheit der anderen zum Trotz völlig allein die Eirene aus der Grube hinaufzieht (511). Auch in dieser Hinsicht war die Wirklichkeit des Nikiasfriedens von der poetischen Wirklichkeit sehr weit entfernt.

Die Rückkehr der Eirene in dieser Gestalt ist ein *ἀδύνατον*: die Störenfriede lassen sich so leicht nicht abfertigen, Athen wird die Anforderungen seines Reiches nicht ohne weiteres loswerden können, die Rückkehr zur bäuerlichen Einfalt ist nicht mehr möglich. Nur sieht es, wie so oft, aus, alsob eine Rückkehr der – selbstverständlich idealisierten – früheren Verhältnisse die Probleme der Gegenwart lösen könnte. Daß so etwas nie möglich ist, daß man die Uhr nun einmal nicht zurückstellen kann, daß sie, sozusagen, *diese* Zeit nie angegeben

hat, weiß Aristophanes so gut wie z.B. ein Industriekapitän weiß, daß er sich nach den einfachen Verhältnissen seiner frühen Jahre zurücksehnen kann, sich vorstellen kann, das Leben wäre wieder so unkompliziert wie damals, ohne auch nur einen Moment zu glauben, die Rückkehr wäre tatsächlich möglich, oder sogar erwünscht.

Es ist nur dem Dichter gegeben, der komplizierten Problematik der Gegenwart ihre Drohung wenigstens scheinbar zu nehmen, indem er sich eine möglichst simplifizierte, fiktive Lösung ausdenkt, die der Sehnsucht des Publikums (oder: die Sehnsucht die das Publikum empfinden sollte) entgegenkommt und die Unzufriedenheit ausnützt, oder sogar wachruft. Die phantastische Welt, die der Dichter heraufbeschwört, schenkt dem Publikum Erholung und Abspannung, und befriedigt zugleich die latent oder offen vorhandene Aggresivität: wer im wirklichen Leben Schwierigkeiten verursacht, ist auf der Bühne eine ohnmächtige Karikatur, die vergebens versucht, das Utopia zu zerstören – auch dies eine Simplifizierung: die positiven Seiten solcher Personen läßt der Dichter einfach weg.

Während der Aufführung des Stückes fühlt man sich überlegen, mächtiger als im tagtäglichen Leben. Zudem gewinnt man Distanz: Aristophanes ist ja auch διδάσκαλος; was das Publikum als selbstverständlich hinzunehmen geneigt ist, zeigt sich in der Perspektive des Dichters änderungsfähig oder sogar änderungsbedürftig.

Versucht man, auch den *Frieden* in solcher Weise zu verstehen, so läßt sich manches unverständliches vielleicht erklären.

Die Friedensverhandlungen sind im Gange: es ist zu erwarten, daß früher oder später ein Abkommen erreichbar sein wird. Aristophanes konnte im voraus wissen, daß ein Vertrag in diesem Augenblick den Krieg nicht endgültig beseitigen würde: die Lage ist für eine wirkliche Versöhnung nicht geeignet, die Gegner werden einander nicht in Ruhe lassen bevor der eine den anderen der völligen Vernichtung preisgegeben haben wird. Die Mehrheit der Bürger wird sich jedoch nur allzugern täuschen lassen: man wird glauben, der Friede bringe tatsächlich die ersehnte Ruhe, bringe jedem die Möglichkeit, sich dem eigenen Wohlergehen zu widmen, die Verluste wieder gut zu machen. Der Dichter schafft somit ein Utopia. Er läßt die Leitung gerade denjenigen zufallen, die realiter nicht die geringste Macht besitzen: Athen wird folglich wieder eine Art Agrarstaat sein, und trotzdem sein Reich behalten können! Es sollte einen nachdenklich machen, daß gerade in diesem Stücke zum ersten Male das Landleben Züge der Idyllik und Bukolik bekommt, die sich wohl weniger aus Freude über den endlich

erreichten Frieden als aus Sehnsucht nach dem Unerreichbaren erklären lassen. Das neue Empfinden des Landlebens ist m.E. das sicherste Zeichen dafür, daß wir es hier mit einer Utopie zu tun haben. Aristophanes hat kein Festspiel schreiben wollen, sondern beschwört eine Welt·herauf, deren Niedergang ein unter der Leitung der 'Pazifisten' abgeschlossener Vertrag wieder etwas näher bringen wird. Falls es wirklich einer Erklärung bedarf, daß Aristophanes diesmal nicht den ersten Preis bekommen hat, so dürfte diese zu suchen sein in einer leichten Verstimmung des Publikums. Die Freude der Landleute auf der Bühne dürfte mit der Weise in der die gesamte Bevölkerung Athens den herannahenden Frieden empfand nicht in Einklang gewesen sein.[5] Es ist eine Freude die eine Moral in sich trägt, und wer die diplomatischen Erfolge des Nikias dankbar zu begrüßen bereit stand, dürfte die Sehnsucht des Aristophaneischen Trygaios und seiner Kompane schlecht verstanden haben. Vielleicht wäre dem Dichter ein größerer Erfolg beschert gewesen, wenn der Friede voraussichtlich noch weit entfernt gewesen wäre. Jetzt, wo er gerade bevorstand, dürfte die Mehrheit seines Publikums sich ein richtiges Festspiel gewünscht haben.

[5] Cf. F.E. Adcock, *CAH* V, 249: "The play reflects the growing desire for peace, the realization that fratricidal strife was grinding Greece to powder, and that now there was hope, because the two 'pestles of war' had vanished. Equally clearly are revealed in the play the cross-currents of self-interest which made it hard, even now, to reach a settlement." Das ist z.T. richtig gesehen. Ich möchte jedoch die Worte "now there was hope..." streichen, und hinzufügen, dass "a settlement" erreichbar war, nur nicht ein richtiger Friede.

PRE-PLATONIC, PLATONIC AND ARISTOTELIAN POETICS OF IMITATION

1. In the European tradition of literary theory, the association of literature and 'imitation' (*μίμησις*) is connected first of all with the name of Aristotle. His view of epic and dramatic literature (*ποίησις*) as the 'imitation of an action' (*μίμησις πράξεως*), for many centuries, has belonged to the hard core of what has been accomplished in the analysis of the phenomenon of literature. The question I want to address is that of the history of the twin concepts *μίμησις* and *ποίησις* before Aristotle. Plato used the combination of the two to determine the place of literature in the model for society he developed in his *Politeia*. There is, however, no consensus about the question whether the combination originated with him.

An additional complication is that there is no consensus about the precise meaning and connotations of the term *μίμησις*: according to some (Else 1958) 'imitation', 'true-to-life representation' would yield a translation that approximates to the meaning of the word, while others (Koller, and, to a lesser extent, Sörbom and Verdenius) deem it necessary to give the term a broader meaning, such as 'impersonation', 'Darstellung', 'Ausdruck'.

I will, then, discuss the following three questions:

- what is the lexical meaning (or denotation) of the word *μίμησις*?
- what is the role the concept of *μίμησις* played before Plato?
- what is the relationship between the current use of the term and Plato's use of it in connection with literature?

2. As for the first question, I shall be brief. An overview of the most common usages of the term in the preclassical and classical period, in my opinion, does not justify any reasonable doubt that '(true-to-life) imitation', '(lifelike) representation' largely coincide with the essence of the meaning of *μίμησις* in this period – the product of *μίμησις* being an artifact, a kind of behaviour etc., that comes so close to the model's salient characteristics and/or impact on the perceiver that it may be taken for its model:

(a) The imitation of sounds by means of the human voice or a musical instrument:
Aesch. *Choeph.* 563: Orestes and his companion imitate the dialect of Phocis (γλώσσης αὐτὴν Φωκίδος μιμουμένω).
Pind. *Pyth.* XII,20: Athena's flute music imitates Euryale's lamentations (... μιμήσαιτ' ἐρικλάγκταν γόον).

(b) Imitation of movements:
Xen. *Mem.* I.7,2: a bad flute player can impress his audience by imitating the gestures of a virtuoso flute player (τὰ ἔξω τῆς τέχνης μιμεῖσθαι).
Xen. *Symp.* II.21: an acrobatic dancer is able to turn a cartwheel backwards and thus imitate a wheel turning (τρόχους ἐμιμεῖτο).

(c) Imitation in painting and sculpture:
Hdt. II.78: a wooden image of a body in a coffin that seems very real because of its realistic painting (μεμιμημένος ἐς τὰ μάλιστα γραφῇ).

(d) Imitation of actions, behaviour &c.:
Eur. *El.* 1035: when a man commits adultery his wife wants to imitate him by (also) taking a lover (μιμεῖσθαι τὸν ἄνδρα).
Ar. *Nub.* 1430: 'if you want to imitate cocks in everything why don't you also eat shit?' (τοὺς ἀλεκτρύονας ἅπαντα μιμεῖ).
Ar. *Thesm.* 850: Euripides' relative will imitate the poet's new Helen and this is easily done because he is already dressed up as a woman (τὴν καινὴν Ἑλένην μιμήσομαι).

(e) Imitation of (admired) examples:
Theogn. 370: 'no one is capable of imitating me', or, if one likes, 'of equalling me' (μιμεῖσθαι οὐδεὶς δύναται).

What all these examples have in common is that imitating someone or something renders a replica one could confuse with the 'real thing'. If the translations 'imitate', 'represent' are not satisfactory, this is mostly so in cases such as under (e) where 'imitating' implies emulating (cf. also Hdt. IV.166: ἐμιμέετο τοῦτον: Aryandes, in a sense, wanted to be a 'second Darius').

3. A review of current usage of μίμησις up to and including the time of Xenophon and Plato will show that the term is particularly at home in a number of specific contexts.

3.1. From Aristophanes, Xenophon, Plato and Isocrates it can be gathered that one of the motives for making the reading of epic poetry part of the school curriculum, was that it was supposed to inspire the pupil to imitate examples from tradition that are worthy of imitation. When Protagoras, in Plato's dialogue, discusses the role of poets in traditional education, he says that pupils are introduced to Homer in

order to be inspired to follow the example of the great heroes and thus to become like them (Plato *Prot.* 326a; cf. e.g. Ar. *Ran.* 1026-7, Xen. *Mem.* I.6,3; Isocr. I.11). Terms that are associated with μίμησις in this type of context are ὀρέγεσθαι, ἀντεκτείνειν, ζηλοῦν, ἐπιθυμεῖν (cf. Ar. *Ran.* 1041, Isocr. IV.159).

3.2. Some pre-Socratics consider man's technical skills to be imitations of what one finds in nature: the weaver takes the spider as his example, the singer the birds, &c. (Heracl. *VS* 22 B 10; Democr. *VS* 55 B 154; Hippocr. *De Victu* I.11. Cf. Else 1958, 82).

3.3. The idea that sculptures or paintings are admirable because they are successful representations of reality can be found in various places from Homer to Plinius. Achilles' shield for instance, showed a field that is being ploughed. The picture, in spite of its being done in gold, suggests that the earth behind the plough takes on a darker colour (*Iliad* Σ 548-9).

The mythical model-artist Daedalus was capable of making sculptures resemble living people: his sculptures are praised as lacking only the ability to speak (cf. Eur. *Hec.* 836). Together with numerous anecdotes like the one about the birds picking at the grapes painted by Zeuxis (Plin. *Nat. Hist.* 35,64; cf. Overbeck's testimonia 121, 128, 542, 555, 1065, 1164, 1715, 1835), this may make one wonder whether a successful representation of reality was the primary objective of the Greek visual arts. Because we have hardly any relevant statements from the artists themselves, we can only observe that, apparently, virtuosity in this area met with great admiration. A painting, for instance, by Parrhasius was praised highly because it showed two hoplites in a state of exhaustion – one of them showing his fatigue in his way of walking and the other in the gesture with which he lays down his weapons (Overbeck nr. 1715): the painter succeeded in creating the suggestion of exhaustion by way of precise observation and representation of the posture of someone who is gulping for air. Even greater virtuosity was required for a painting that showed Odysseus when he was pretending insanity (Plut. *De aud. poet.* 3).

In Xenophon's *Memorabilia* (III.10,1 ff.) Socrates has a conversation with two painters, which offers some insight into the materialization of such wonders. He admires their skill in representing the most various surfaces – hollow, round, dark, light, hard, soft, rough, smooth, young – in a true-to-life way. We have apparently arrived at the period of the so-called σκιαγραφία, that is associated with the names of Agatharchus, Apollodorus, Zeuxis and Parrhasius: one tries to

enhance the illusion of three-dimensional images in a flat surface by way of colour schemes, shadowing and other ways of suggesting visual depth.

According to the purpose of his *Memorabilia*, Xenophon arranges things in such a way that Socrates is made to explain to Parrhasius how he must proceed in order to succeed in representing characters (such as an *ἀνὴρ ὑβριστικός*) and feelings. To achieve that, he is to observe and then represent the visible signs of different characters and moods. Socrates' statement helps to give us an idea of the fashionable virtuoso realism in the visual arts of the period concerned: Zeuxis' grapes were picked at by birds and the painted look in the eyes of a dangerous warrior truly scares the spectator.

Xenophon's terminology (*ἀπεικάζοντες ἐκμιμεῖσθε*) makes it unmistakably clear that *μίμησις* is the term for true-to-life representation, whereas *εἰκάζω* refers to the production of a recognizable image of something without any possibility of its being taken for its model. This corresponds with the usage in Herodotus, for instance, who calls the above-mentioned *memento mori* a *μίμημα*, but uses the term *εἰκών* (image) for the crude sculptures of Cleobis and Biton, or for the hieratic sculptures of Egyptian priests.

3.4. In the area of music, it can be inferred from our sources (see below) that there was a controversy about the question whether in the combination of melody, rhythm and words, the music or the words should dominate. In this controversy, *μίμησις* plays a role too. It appears that the emphasis on music at the expense of the words, decried by Plato, went hand in hand with a growing tendency towards realism.

One of the oldest testimonies relating to the effect of music at issue here, can be found in Pindar (*Pyth.* XII, cited above): Athena, after having helped Perseus fight the Gorgons, invents flute music that imitates Euryale's lamentations in a *πάμφωνον μέλος*. There is no indication whatsoever that this should involve an 'interpretation' of grief or an 'Ausdruck eines Affekts' (cf. Georgiades 21): the underlying idea is directly comparable to the pictorial imitation of an *ἀνὴρ δεινός*: the *γόος* is the audible expression – the *τεκμήριον* – of grief, and the music imitates what can be heard. As *γόος* arouses the need for *γόος* (cf. Hom. *Iliad* Ψ 14), the *μίμησις γόου* can have a similar effect: by imitating the characteristic sound that reveals an emotion the musician can arouse that same emotion in those who hear his music.

It is this effect of music – that is connected with the mythical Marsyas and with the names of Pratinas and Lasus of Hermione – that

was considered of paramount importance by the fashionable poet-musicians from around the turn of the fifth to the fourth century: Philoxenus, Timotheus, Cinesias and, among tragedians, Agathon and Euripides in his later years. Our information on the subject is rather scanty: some fragments and titles, parodies by Aristophanes and some *testimonia* (Plato *Leg.* 700d; Dion. Hal. *De Comp. Verb.* 85 UR; ps.-Aristot. *Probl.* XIX, 918 b; ps.-Plut. *De Mus.* 1142a; cf. Schönewolf 1938; Kranz 1933).

Plato criticizes the poets of dithyrambs and *nomoi* for catering to their audience's wish to be entertained. Being guided by the ἡδύ, they lost sight of the laws that should govern music: because they wanted to imitate reality (μιμούμενοι) they mixed different types of song and imitated *aulos* songs with their *kithara* songs, "putting everything together with everything else" (*Laws* 700c-d). From (ps.-)Arist. *Probl.* XIX we learn that these poets, for this reason, abandoned strophic composition: the repetition of an identical metrical pattern in a series of successive strophes limited the freedom of musical design that was required for the μίμησις pursued.

Some of the transmitted titles indeed indicate a choice of subjects that provided maximum scope for the realistic μίμησις aimed at. Timotheus for instance composed an *Insane Ajax* and a *Semele's Travails.* The second title comes with an anecdote: someone is said to have remarked after hearing the composition: 'if she had delivered a labourer instead of Dionysus, she would have screamed a different song' (Page, *PMG* 792). Philoxenus composed a *Cyclops* (indirectly known from Aristophanes' parody, *Plut.* 290 ff.), that has the choir bleating and grunting like the herd of Polyphemus and the companions of Odysseus who had turned into pigs. In the *Thesmophoriazusae,* Agathon even goes so far as to dress up as a woman to enable himself to write about women in as true-to-life a fashion as possible (*Thesm.* 155).

Our data suffice to show that, during Plato's early years, μίμησις in the sense of true-to-life imitation was an important part of the artistic programme of fashionable poets-composers. They apparently presented themselves, and were certainly considered, as capable of imitating anything at all, in search of subject-matter which would allow them to show off their mimetic virtuosity – similar to Richard Strauss, as it were, who is said to have claimed the ability to put a glass of beer into music. As Plato has it, the time-honoured subordination of music to words and of the instrumental accompaniment to the song was abandoned for the sake of true-to-life μίμησις.

4. The fifth century contributions towards a rudimentary theory of literature show no indications of any awareness of a *systematic* connection between *μίμησις* and *ποίησις* that would anticipate what we find in Plato and Aristotle.

4.1. For Gorgias, it is not true-to-life imitation of people who encounter fortune or misfortune, but the magic effect of poetic diction (λέξις) that arouses the emotions characteristic of *ποίησις*: as he has it in his *Helen* (9), the poet is able to make his audience experience the emotions that go with fortune and misfortune as these become manifest in the actions and characters of others. The basic point of this statement is the observation that the audience's *own* emotions are aroused by what befalls *others* – which is meant to illustrate the overwhelming power of the spoken word. It is to be connected (a) with Pindar's observation (e.g. *Olymp.* I,30ff.) that the stylistic gifts of the poet enable him to make his audience believe what is not true, and to make the incredible credible, and (b) with Solon's *πολλὰ ψεύδονται ἀοιδοί*. The idea that poets deliberately mislead their audience apparently stems from Gorgias himself (Plut. *Glor. Ath.* 348c, *Hel.* 8), who, by his choice of the word *ἀπάτη*, gives an extra point to Solon's adage, which may, but does not necessarily imply intentional 'deception'.

4.2. The idea of *μίμησις* as a characteristic feature of *ποίησις* may indeed be present in a rudimentary form in a *bon mot* of Simonides, who is said to have likened a picture to a silent poem and a poem to a speaking picture (Plut. *De Aud. Poet.* 18a) – a comparison which in its Horatian form *ut pictura poesis* had a great future in the later European tradition, until Lessing's *Laokoon* (1767-9) achieved a much more sophisticated analysis of what he termed "die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie."

4.3. The fact that Alcidamas called the *Odyssey* a 'fine mirror of human life' (*καλὸν ἀνθρωπίνου βίου κάτοπτρον*: Arist. *Rhet.* 1406b12) might indeed presuppose a certain relationship between reality and its poetic representation, but the metaphor seems to have been primarily intended to illustrate that one can learn from the poem what one can learn from life itself. Alcidamas uses the same metaphor for the written speech in which one can study (*θεωρῆσαι*) a pupil's progress as if in a mirror, but which is inferior in every other respect to the live, improvised speech (Alc. *De Soph.* 32). The written speech, for him, is a *μίμημα* of the improvised speech – much like a statue, the successful imitation evokes pleasure but is otherwise useless (*ibid.* 27).

4.4. So far, there is no proof of any awareness of the complicated

relationship between reality and its artistic representation, other than that the imitation evokes its model and hence also the (emotional) impact of this. The pleasure derived from this in the case of literature is traced by some to the experience of the emotions evoked, by others to the pleasure people derive from a successful imitation: the virtuoso poet *à la* Philoxenus or Timotheus allegedly will have achieved his goal if he makes his audience take the work of art for its model in the real world.

5. In two longer passages in his *Politeia* (376c ff. and 595a ff.), Plato pays a great deal of attention to literature. In the first passage he discusses the role of *ποίησις* in the education of the guardians, in the second he focuses on the ontological status of *μίμησις* vis à vis its model in reality, with its implications for the philosophical evaluation of the phenomenon of literature. In between the two passages, the most basic principles of Platonic philosophy are discussed, which makes it understandable that the second approach of the issue is both more theoretical and more rigorous than the first one. For the way in which Plato establishes the connection between *μίμησις* and *ποίησις*, the first passage is most important.

The context of Plato's discussion of *μίμησις* – under the heading of *ποίησις* – is his endeavour to determine the requirements of a well-balanced education: *γυμναστική* for the body, *μουσική* for the soul. He observes that the education of the soul starts with telling young children mythical stories, which makes it of the utmost importance that these stories are critically evaluated for their educational value and effects. It is concluded that the gods we encounter in the works of Homer and Hesiod do not at all resemble the example (*μηδὲν ἐοικότα γράφουσιν οἷς ἂν ὅμοια βουληθῶσι γράψαι*). Plato's objections are summarized in the formula *οὐ καλῶς ψεύδουσι*: what the poets tell us is both untrue and harmful. Therefore, the first requirement is that the representation of gods and heroes matches the truth: presenting the gods as adulterers, liars or instigators of evil is absolutely forbidden. The second requirement concerns the *καλῶς*. Pupils should be brought up to virtue, and poetry that harms their moral welfare does not serve this purpose. So no lamentations about life after death, no moaning and crying heroes, let alone gods who are subjected to convulsions of laughter.

This critical evaluation of myths about gods and heroes may be traced back in large part to sources dating from before Plato's time.

Obvious candidates are Pindar (*Ol.* I, 35: "Let a man speak good of the gods, and his blame shall be less") and Xenophanes, with his criticism of the discrepancy between the true image of the divine and the traditional poetic representations of the gods, to whom mankind has wrongly ascribed all that is human. The gods of man resemble man, just as apes would picture gods that resemble apes.

Plato's interpretation of the educational purpose of poetry fully corresponds to the traditional idea of educating the young by way of confronting them with examples that are worth imitating. Reflections of similar applications can be found in Aristophanes' *Clouds* (1371 ff.: 'modern' poetry is to be condemned because it teaches one that it is permitted to hit one's father) and *Frogs.*

The discussion of the content of poetry is followed by that of its design (392c6 ff.). The starting point is that all *ποίησις* is 'diegetic' and that there are three types of narrative: a story can be told by a narrator (*διήγησις*), one can introduce one's characters while acting and speaking (*μίμησις*) or one can use a mixture of both (*δι' ἀμφοτέρων*), as in the case of Homer, who tells part of his story by means of direct speech, pretending he is no longer Homer but Agamemnon or Achilles.

There are then three 'genres': the dramatic genre (tragedy), the mixed genre (epic)[1] and pure undiluted narrative, of which it is difficult to cite instances (394c2: *εὕροις δ' ἂν αὐτὴν μάλιστά που ἐν διθυράμβοις*).

The question as to what would be the correct design of the literature that can be admitted as far as its content is concerned, against this background, appears to boil down to the question whether the guardians in the Platonic state are allowed to be *μιμητικοί*. This is peculiar in itself. After all, the topic of conversation was what kind of poetry may be used in education: so, what is at issue is the reading of poetry by the young and not its production or staging. The idea that, in Plato's time, the *reader* of Homer, in a sense, also practised *μίμησις* is a real possibility, yet not one that Plato seems to have had in mind. In any case, the rest of Plato's argument concentrates on the poet rather than on those who are to be educated.

Plato's answer to the question whether the (prospective) guardians are allowed to practise *μίμησις* is negative. There are two reasons for

---

[1] 394c4-5: *ἔν τε τῇ τῶν ἐπῶν ποιήσει, πολλαχοῦ δὲ καὶ ἄλλοθι, εἴ μοι μανθάνεις*. The enigmatic *πολλαχοῦ δὲ* ... *μανθάνεις* seems to imply that Plato meant to include his own dialogues – which for Aristotle (*Poet.* 1447b11) too belong to the realm of *mimèsis.*

this: first, every citizen should concentrate on what he has been called to do (τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν), whereas μίμησις, with the chameleonic behaviour it requires, would hamper the guardians in focusing on their primary task: nobody does two things as well as he does one. Secondly, μίμησις leaves its mark on the behaviour and character of the imitator: imitated behaviour tends to become a habit, a kind of second nature. That is why one cannot allow a guardian to imitate a woman who is scolding her husband (Medea), who competes with the gods because she regards herself as more fortunate (Niobe), who is sick or in love (Phaedra) or in labour (Semele). Likewise, the guardians are not allowed to imitate slaves, criminals or cowards, let alone insane people (Ajax, Heracles), labourers, rowers or even the whinnying of horses, the bellowing of bulls, the gurgle of water, the roaring of the sea, thunder and hail, the squeaking of wheels, sounds of musical instruments or animals.

The μίμησις that may possibly be permitted will have to avoid changes and transitions (μεταβολαί); it will have to stay within one appropriate mode (ἁρμονία), and in a rhythm that is similarly uniform. The virtuoso who can imitate literally everything will have to be refused access, courteously but definitely (397a-398b).

In respect of music as such – which has already appeared here and there in the examples and requirements discussed – Plato argues (398c ff.) that melody and rhythm should be subordinate to the words: only those ἁρμονίαι and rhythms are allowed that fit the contents selected earlier. Plaintive music is not allowed, the imitation of brave and disciplined men on the other hand is. Instruments that can alternate different ἁρμονίαι are absolutely forbidden: Marsyas' music will have to yield to that of Apollo.

To answer the question which rhythms would be appropriate for the imitation of which lifestyle, Plato makes Socrates subscribe to the views of Damon (400b ff.), who is said to have extensively treated the educational effects of various types of music and to have traced these back to the relationship and similarity between certain rhythms and types of melody and certain characters (ἦθος). Damon's account of the subject matter is summarized in a paraphrase that may well be a more or less faithful rendering of his thoughts, although it lacks the kind of precision that would suit a regular treatise, but would be out of place in a piece of cultivated conversation.

5.1. This summary of Plato's argument suggests the following remarks.

5.1.1. When Socrates explains in what sense Homer practises μίμησις, he starts from exactly the same idea that inspired Aristophanes' caricature of Agathon. The poet quasi-identifies himself with the speaking characters he introduces in his narrative or puts on stage. The application of this idea to 'pure narrative' and to Homer appears to be new.

5.1.2. When Socrates argues that the guardians are only allowed to practise μίμησις under strict, indeed restrictive conditions, he ends up, rather unexpectedly and without much direct relevance to his argument, in a tirade against those who, like magicians, specialize in the kind of virtuosity that enables them to conjure up an astonishing variety of phenomena (397a). The chameleonic capacity of the poets referred to is connected with the frequency of changes (μεταβολαί) in their work, which is surprising. The term usually refers to changes in ἁρμονία. Music, however, is discussed separately in the next and third part of the argument. The listing of items imitated by the scorned virtuosos strongly reminds one of what we know about the poetry and music of Timotheus, Philoxenus and Cinesias. Imitating the sound of water, thunder and lightning, however, apart from lacking dignity, seems to bear little or no risk of character-destroying habit formation, which is after all Socrates' topic.

5.1.3. It is striking that the framework of the argument changes during the discussion of the appropriate design of poetry. There appears to be a gradual shift of topic from the place of literature in the education of the guardians to the writing and, occasionally, the delivery of drama and of dithyrambs and *nomoi.* What Plato has to say about the harmful effects of imitation applies to poets and *a fortiori* to stage actors and to rhapsodes of the type caricatured in the *Ion* rather than to the poets' readership and audience.

6. The above observations justify the assumption that Plato inferred what he felt were the harmful effects of ποίησις from the work of poets *à la* Timotheus and Philoxenus. Their work seems to have been the latest fashion when Plato himself was young, and he despised the poets' popularity as a sign of their servile subjection to the ochlocracy of the theatre- and concert-going public. We may compare the *Gorgias* (502b ff.), in which the solemn pretensions of the poets are contrasted with their uncontrollable eagerness to please their audience – which makes them similar to *traiteurs* rather than to providers of wholesome food for the soul.

It appears, then, that Plato derived his analysis of the impact of ποίησις from what he believed to be the artistic *credo* of these poets: μίμησις in the sense of realistic imitation with maximum exploitation of all, mainly musical, means, and combined with technical innovations that caused a breach in a tradition which had been fairly stable for several centuries. In basing his rejection of epic and tragedy upon this foundation he focused on the poet's μίμησις of his *characters*, and argued that Homer and the tragedians also are 'imitators' because they identified themselves, as it were, with their *dramatis personae*. They too, in the choice and elaboration of their subjects were guided by what one could call their subject's mimetic potential, rather than by its contribution to truth and moral value. By doing so, they forfeited any claim to be counted as educators, because they gave priority to entertaining and manipulating the emotions of a susceptible audience.

It would seem, then, that Plato created the core of what, in the hands of Aristotle, was to become a full-fledged theory of literature by giving to the specific meaning which μίμησις had in the artistic programme of poets, sculptors and painters of his time a broader application that would enable him to extend his negative verdict on the poets of the so-called 'New Dithyramb' to all kinds of ποίησις.

This was all the more logical in view of the role μίμησις already played in the realm of education. Because of the very fact that inspiring the young to imitate the *dramatis personae* of epic and tragedy was an acknowledged part of education, Plato came to decry poetic μίμησις. In a society ruled by the principle that citizens must limit themselves to their own primary task (τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν), if (a) the poet, like Agathon, can be seen to adopt the *persona* of a whole range of different characters, and (b) μίμησις leads to habit formation, one must conclude that the activity of poets is morally dangerous and a threat to the well-being of society, especially in those cases where the poet's choice of subject matter is determineed by his wish for dazzling virtuosity.

6.1. Plato further widened the scope of the term μίμησις by transforming Damon's idea of a *relationship* between musical movement and the movement of the soul (cf. Damon *VS* 37 B 6). For Plato, certain ἁρμονίαι are the μίμησις of the voice of a brave man, and he regards rhythms as μιμήματα βιῶν. His treatment of the correct musical design partly follows the terminology that had probably been used by Damon (ἀκολουθεῖν, ἕπεσθαι, ἀδελφός, πρέπειν); now and then, he introduces the term μίμησις, which, strictly speaking, does not fit the Damonian

metaphors. Dance and music that lack (the appropriate) posture, rhythm and harmony, agree with what is morally reprehensible in word and deed. In contrast, the right elements of musical design are said to agree with and to be *the imitation of* a controlled and commendable character. This illustrates how Plato used the *μίμησις*-terminology as a means to link Damon's use of music as an instrument for 'tuning' the soul of the citizens with his own view of poetry as *μίμησις* and thus as an instrument for character formation, the use of which must be carefully supervised: if we leave it to the poets, it will have a corrupting effect by nourishing the lower instincts instead of habituating both the young and the adult to follow the dictates of reason; it will strengthen rather than curb their appetite for the kind of pleasure that goes with thrilling sensations.

7. In the tenth Book of the *Politeia* (595a-608b), Socrates again subjects *ποίησις* to a critical examination, but now on the basis of the fundamental principles of metaphysics, which, in the meantime, have enabled him to trace the outline of a perfect society.

The practice of poets and artists that dominated the discussion of the role of literature in education, seems to have lost its relevance. There are no references here to virtuoso poets and musicians: the poet is compared to the painter of trivial objects such as chairs and beds, in order to illustrate that both are equally far removed from true reality. The poet produces an image of an image: from the philosopher's perspective, his *μιμήματα* are surely not to be praised as true-to-life representations of 'reality': they are no more than faint images (*εἴδωλα*) of what itself is at best a pale and distorted reflection of true reality, and have the status of the reflection of a piece of carpentry in a mirror. The enchanting poetic diction misleads the audience, and makes people forget that, for all its attractive virtuosity, the imitation of the visible world does not require any insight into that world, let alone into the principles of an ideal order. Stripped of poetic style and music, the work of poets resembles the face of people who have seen better days.

From this analysis it necessarily follows that the effect of poetry is geared to the non-rational elements in man's soul. Sense perception will never provide knowledge of what belongs to the realm of reason; still less will the mimetic artist, who aims at representing the look of things, including the distortions that – due to the *παθήματα* of human nature – are inherent in sense perception.

Just as the painter works with perspectival distortions and consequently does not represent even visible things the way they actually are, but rather the way they appear to us, so the poet shows us his *personae* in their reactions to what happens to them, reactions that vary according to their psychic constitution. One and the same event can be seen to make one person rebellious, another melancholic, yet another firmly resigned. The wise man, however, who can bear all and is worthy of imitation, is scorned by the poets since he is hardly a promising subject for those who want to arouse a variety of emotions, and moreover will not be appreciated by the majority of the audience.

The poets then, like the painters, do not appeal to man's reason, but strengthen those elements that should be subordinate to reason. If we then allow poetry to enter the gates of the city, emotions instead of law and reason will dominate. The onus of proof that this is not harmful but useful is on the poets. They are to be excluded until they succeed in proving this.

7.1. In the background of this fundamental rejection, next to the Platonic ontological hierarchy that is its basis, we again find Gorgias, who in his *Helen* called terror, pity and fear the most characteristic emotions evoked by ποίησις. Plato too mentions precisely these emotions (φρίττειν, δακρῦσαί τε καὶ ἀποδύρασθαι), which he, like Gorgias, sees as the main source of the ἡδονή the poet aims for.

8. It is beyond the scope of this argument to discuss the way Plato used μίμησις in his later work. Verdenius has pointed out that there are places in Plato's dialogues where imitation involves the idea of approximation, and does not imply a true copy. But this can not be said of the passages in *Politeia* X, where it is the μίμησις φαντάσματος which plays the main role, an almost oxymoron-like combination of concepts, which summarizes Plato's verdict on ποίησις as the paradoxical result of the desire to imitate in a way that is as true to 'life' as possible a model that is only a phantom, without any suggestion or evocation of a higher reality. The choice of examples in book X seems inspired by this negative evaluation. The underlying analysis leaves no room for appreciating a possible attempt on the part of the poets to convey something essential regarding man and the world. On the contrary: there is nothing in the *Politeia* that even hints at the possibility of an inspired poet whose utterances, however distorted, merit the philosopher's serious attention (cf., for instance, *Phaedrus* 245a, *Laws* 719c).

9. The above argument aims to show that Plato's use of the concept of μίμησις (in the sense of lifelike representation, realistic imitation) as an ingredient of his analysis of the corruptive potential of Homer and the tragic poets was prompted by the role the concept played for the poets (and visual artists) of his time. This is one more example of the fact that it was the Athenian society of around the turn of the century that served as the prime example of much that Plato sought to prevent in his paradigmatic *Politeia.* The artistic programme and practice of Timotheus, Philoxenus and the Euripides of the *Helen* and the *Orestes* were hardly suited to persuade a man like Plato that poets could be entrusted with the role of teachers of the community. The terms in which Plato expresses himself reveal that his rejection of ποίησις was largely inspired by the innovations in mimetic art of around 400. Breaking the time-honoured conventions of music and instrumentation, subordinating the spoken word of reason to music and cultivating thrilling emotions, all of them threatened the very stability society required, the more so because – as Gorgias had said *disertis verbis* – the multitude is like putty in the hands of those who know how to exploit the power of the λόγος and to drug the audience as if by magic.

10. It is a truism that Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, made extensive use of Plato's analysis of ποίησις, modifying it in such a way that literature could be assigned a place of its own instead of being made subservient to a philosopher's educational priorities. But we can be more explicit about the precise nature of the modifications that enabled Aristotle to turn Plato's analysis, which served to justify a ban on ποίησις, into a full-fledged theory of literature.

Aristotle's most salient intervention is his redefinition of Plato's concept of 'myth' (μῦθος) in the sense of 'story' as 'action' (πρᾶξις, σύστασις πραγμάτων), which pushes the *dramatis personae* to the background: the play includes the characters *for the sake of the action* (1450a21). The emotions (παθήματα) as we know them from both Gorgias and Plato are preserved in Aristotle's ἔλεος, φόβος καὶ τοιαῦτα παθήματα, as is the idea that these παθήματα are experienced as pleasant by the audience. However, with the introduction of the action as the prime object of μίμησις and the pre-eminently constitutive element of a piece of literature, the bearer of these emotions changes. It is the course of action as such that shocks the audience, moves them to tears or fills them with fear, rather than the feelings of the *dramatis personae* that, aided by the power of poetic diction, are transferred to the spec-

tator. These persons do not need to be predominantly realistic. The main requirement is that they have some stature and ethical substance, not because they must be worth imitating, but because subjecting to misfortune a person who is excellent in every respect (or having a base character meet with good fortune) would block the emotions to be evoked by the action.

The second modification Aristotle introduces is his identification of the object of μίμησις. Its object is no longer the 'reality' that is so often at odds with the 'truth' (this ambiguity of the Greek term ἀληθές is often important in Plato), but a *conceivable* reality (οἷα ἂν γένοιτο) that can have a certain philosophical significance, insofar it rises above the mere incidents, the γενόμενα, that as such are devoid of any wider significance.

The experience of misfortune or calamity as such (πάθος) is indeed often called 'tragic', as is a lamentable coincidence, but in the Aristotelian tragedy a πάθος is only functional if it is brought about by an action that is paradigmatic because of the causal relations it reveals. It is not the fact that an Oedipus, right in front of our eyes, turns from a happy and prosperous man into a rejected one which is tragic, but the fact that the reversal of fortune that befalls him results from an unbreakable chain of events, the start of which was an unintentional error of judgement made by a man of stature.

The audience, as Gorgias and Plato saw them, tremble because they see trembling and weep because they see weeping, but in Aristotle's analysis, the audience is moved by the action because of their own involvement in the significance of what takes place on stage. To achieve this, the poet's ability to depict characters that are true-to-life is at most of secondary importance. The focus is on the action: the tragic fear and commiseration are aroused by the very structure of a plot which meets the standards of necessity or probability. The poet may more easily convince his audience if he sees to it that the action is believable (πιθανόν), but an action that is downright impossible (ἀδύνατον) is preferable to an action that is nothing but a mere succession of unrelated incidents. Even the requirement that the poet himself should see what he is representing with the vividness of an eyewitness is derived from the requirements of the action: doing so "he will devise what is appropriate and be least likely to overlook incongruities (τὰ ὑπεναντία)" (*Poet.* 1455a24-6). Aristotle is ready to concede that the poet who has a gift for feeling himself the emotions to be described will be more convincing (1455a32 ff.), but the poet's first

and foremost task is to reduce the story to a universal form that meets the standards of the *σύστασις πραγμάτων* as Aristotle defined them. Only then may he proceed to expand it to the length required and fill in the details that will enhance its effect (*ibid.*).

The fact, then, that the object of Aristotelian *μίμησις* is no longer the *dramatis persona* of a piece of epic or dramatic narrative, but a coherent series of events is no reason to suppose that *μίμησις* underwent a change of meaning. Even in those cases where the poetic action is a piece of 'fiction', the term *μίμησις* is appropriate: the audience is to experience the action presented by the poet as a representation of life itself. They must be enabled to live through the action as if it were real: if what they are shown produces the effect of something artificial and theoretical, having no relationship with life as it is, there will be no emotional impact at all. It is the very tension between lifelike reality and *οἷα ἂν γένοιτο* in the pregnant Aristotelian sense that results in the emotions aroused having the cathartic effect which is the hallmark of any *ποίησις* that meets the Aristotelian standards.

PLUTARCH'S LITERARY THEORY
A PHILOSOPHER'S ALIBI FOR TEACHING LITERATURE

1. Among the various factors that have determined the selection of extant literary texts from Greek antiquity, the function they had in education is not the least important one. The role Homeric epic and a limited number of tragedies and comedies had in educational curricula, has substantially furthered the preservation of these texts. There are many indications that in the Hellenistic and 'post-Hellenistic' period, the school was the main supporting base of epic and dramatic poetry. The absolute number of adults who kept an interest in the texts they had been taught when they were young seems to have been small – maybe even smaller than in any period of European history since the Renaissance.

This state of affairs, remarkable in itself, obtains a paradoxical aspect when one realizes that, from the 430s BC onwards, there were strong movements towards restricting the pupils' reading programme, or even maintaining that literature should fulfil no educational role at all, so as not to expose young and impressionable minds to potentially harmful influences. This kind of 'censorship' has its context primarily in the widespread conviction that literature must serve a purpose outside itself: it must be useful, if not by increasing one's command of language and knowledge of the world, then by improving the ethical makeup of its audience and readership. The discussion between Socrates and Ion about the pretension that knowing Homer implies knowledge of many τέχναι, or the stakes in the competition between Aeschylus and Euripides in Aristophanes' *Frogs*, can only be understood if the practical and ethical profit to be derived from epic and tragic poetry were an evaluation criterion that many considered relevant.

This situation is obviously connected with the fact that the poets used to look for their subject matter in a corpus of traditional myths which, apart from being suitable for artistic purposes, also involved giving meaning to the world, offering interpretations of problems and conflicts inherent in human existence, and which often had religious significance. To give up this type of pretensions was not the least significant of the innovations made by the Hellenistic poets. Their

selection of subject matter was determined by its suitability for literary purposes rather than by its ideological or philosophical potential significance, and this may have been one of the main reasons why the work of Callimachus, Apollonius and Theocritus has not played any considerable role in education – be it ancient or modern.

Considering that the majority of ancient philosophers did not have purely scientific but also, and sometimes particularly, practical-ethical purposes, it is hardly surprising that subscribing to a certain philosophical view implied that one had to choose a position on the issue of the function of literature in education and society. Nor can it be surprising that this position tended to be a critical, and sometimes a downright condemning one. After all, this kind of critical reflection began in a period in which the disintegration of a society that had been closely connected with heroic epic and tragedy was coming to a conclusion. A comparison of, for instance, Aeschylus' *Oresteia* or *Persians* with any one of Euripides' tragedies suffices to show that the symbolic value of the traditional mythical-historical subjects has changed: the interpretation of the myths no longer confirms the ideology society is inspired by, but makes it disputable, as Aristophanes' criticism of Euripides proves. Those who had something to lose were even inclined to make the poets responsible for what they considered to be a change for the worse.

The corrosion of the educational potential of the mythical tradition, together with increasing social mobility and the related need for professional education in a more diverse and complex society, created a vacuum which a new generation of teachers, Socrates among them, tried to fill. The dominance of the Socratic approach, Platonic style, in our sources – which would have gratified Plato – has resulted in the positions advocated by Protagoras, Prodicus and Gorgias being pushed to the background. It seems that Protagoras assigned a primarily propaedeutic function to the critical-interpretative reading of poetry, and that Gorgias mainly focused on the recreational possibilities of tragedy as the catalyst for collective emotions – to the dismay of Plato, on whose dialogues we have to depend to a great extent for our knowledge about these issues. In spite of a lack of information preventing us from precisely tracking the relevant connections, there can be no doubt that the contribution of epic and tragedy to the curriculum of general education and of the schools of rhetoric was determined in these years: poetry became part of a propaedeutic teaching programme which aimed at a professional use of language,

and at providing students with a rich source of quotations, arguments and constructive ideas. Isocrates may not have remained as widely known as Socrates and Plato, but in determining the objectives of secondary and tertiary education, both in antiquity and afterwards, this rival of Plato's Academy has been more than successful.

Plato's view on the issue has become most familiar. He required, more rigorously than anyone else, that poetry have an educational value, and this made him advocate the almost total rejection of what epic and tragic poetry had to offer: in his opinion, poetry could only produce intellectual, emotional and moral harm. His rejection is based on principles that are so fundamental to him that it is doubtful that he would have been willing to compromise. What we find about this issue in the *Gorgias* and the *Ion* consistently reveals the same rigorism as the view expressed in the *Politeia*.

The allegorical interpretation that was advocated especially by the Stoics, offered a way to unite poetic and philosophical truth and value. For them, the mythical tradition as it was transmitted by classical poetry contained precious reflections of the wisdom from a distant past, but this valuable core would only become apparent if one separated the 'what' and the 'how'. If correctly decoded, the old stories could be shown to contain interpretations of nature and the world that bore a productive relation to the tenets of philosophy. Such a way of reading, however, has its limitations: if it is not to appear completely artificial, it can only be applied to a limited part of literature, and furthermore requires a sophisticated reader, aware of pitfalls – and is therefore unsuitable for the young and inexperienced.

An approach which yields an explicit frame of reference for what one nowadays would call literary criticism can in fact only be found in Aristotle. He recognized ποίησις as a separate and valuable domain of human activity, as a medium which has its own specific purpose in that it satisfies the audience's need for indulging in the feelings of shock and misery about the vicissitudes of human life, while at the same time increasing their emotional stability and their capacity for confronting life as it is. The Aristotelian approach was unique in that it sought to accord to literature its own place, as well as its own function, instead of regarding it as merely instrumental for the ethical and philosophical education of its audience. For the first time, it offers a well-founded set of criteria for the evaluation of literature on its own terms. The conditions under which Aristotle's esoteric writings, including the *Poetics*, were transmitted have, however, resulted in something

of a paradox: although the *Poetics* belongs to the limited number of Aristotle's writings that even now have not been superseded, its influence in antiquity itself seems to have been rather small.

2. Plutarch's treatise *How should young people respond to literature?* (πῶς δεῖ τοὺς νέους ποιημάτων ἀκούειν, often quoted under its Latin title *De poetis audiendis*, or *Quomodo adulescens poetas audire debeat*) presents itself as a kind of guide for a friend whose young son Cleandrus, like Plutarch's own son, is at an age at which the question posed in the title had to be answered by his educators. It contains an attempt to square the circle by developing a view of literature that would enable the author to allow poetry to keep its traditional place in the school curriculum, without having to forsake his Plato-inspired philosophical convictions.

As appears from the introduction, it is taken for granted that the boys' education should prepare them for philosophy, or rather: for a way of life that is inspired by philosophical principles. There is no point, however, in bothering young pupils with straightforwardly philosophical tracts, nor in completely cutting off one's sons from literature. It is preferable to keep a check on their way of dealing with the work of poets, the more so because intellectually gifted children will be particularly sensitive to the pleasures literature has to offer, and can therefore be easily damaged. It may even be possible to combine business with pleasure, and to make sure that not only no harm is done, but some benefit is even established. In that case, there will be no need to avoid literature: it may be given a place in education, and the pupil will be trained in deriving benefit from pleasant things.

Plutarch fully shares Plato's conviction that literature may have harmful effects: it is, he says, apt to cause damage to one's character (15A: βλάπτει καὶ διαφθείρει) and to threaten self-control and rationality by arousing confusing emotions (15C: ταρακτικὸν καὶ παράφορον). His reason for not drawing the same rigorous conclusions from this that Plato did, is that, practically speaking, a total ban on literature is not feasible: it would require a completely different school education from the customary one. So the best thing to do is to teach the gifted pupil how to protect himself, thereby at the same time creating an opportunity to show him that sometimes poets too say sensible things that are worthy of consideration, and which, due to their appealing form, come across more easily. The theoretical foundation of Plutarch's conviction that such a route could indeed be followed, after the introduction summarized above, constitutes the beginning of the argument

proper – which runs its course in two parts: chapters 2 and 3 of the work.

2.1. The motto of chapter 2 is the aphorism ascribed to Solon: *πολλὰ ψεύδονται ἀοιδοί*: poets tell many things that are not true. Their reason for doing so is that they have to entertain the audience: since the truth is hardly ever entertaining and often unpleasant, they have to make up their own stories, thereby creating the opportunity for satisfying the audience's need for a happy ending. It is after all not the stylistic and musical design that makes an utterance into poetry. The pleasant effects of literature originate primarily with an expertly ordered story. It is because poets know how to construct a story, or *μῦθος*, and not because they write in beautiful words, that the listener forgets himself and is satisfied.

What is remarkable in this argument is that it is a curious and unique conflation of concepts and ideas we know from elsewhere. A brief inventory may illustrate this. The idea that poets primarily aim to please their audience is a conviction Gorgias and Plato distilled from their observation of the poetic practice of their contemporaries. The idea that stories with a happy ending mainly serve the audience's wish to be entertained can be found in Aristotle, who speaks of the weakness of an audience who like to have the good guys end up well and the bad ones end up badly (*Poetics* 1453a34). The idea that it is not the stylistic form but the *μῦθος* which is the distinguishing feature of *ποίησις*, is an Aristotelian one (cf. 1447b18), just as the words *εὖ πεπλεγμένη διάθεσις* have an Aristotelian ring to them. To describe its effect, however, Plutarch uses terms (*αἱμυλία, χάρις, ἔκπληξις*) which are most definitely not Aristotelian, but rather reminiscent of Gorgias, who used them to describe the remarkable effects of poetic style, which enables the poet to move his audience, making them forget that the story they are told, or the drama they are watching, is just fiction. That, finally, a story that is elegantly written but lacks plausibility is like a painting without colour, may go back to the comparison between literature and painting first found in Simonides, but Plutarch gives the comparison a rather artificial turn, which makes its precise application hard to understand: he apparently intends to compare the illusion of visual depth by means of colour and shadow to the plausibility of a piece of narrative.

All in all, the argument leaves the impression of having been written by one who either was only superficially familiar with the theories he is pillaging, or was ready to combine *pour les besoins de sa cause*

quite a few elements which are incompatible, at the cost of destroying in the process both Plato's and Aristotle's analysis of the relationship between literature and life, which surely was much more sophisticated than Solon's saying that poets tell many things that are not true – of which, by the way, we do not know whether it was meant as a polemical or an ironically provocative remark.

In any case: if the pupil is made aware of the fact that the stories of literature aim to entertain him with 'lies', this will help him to be on his guard. In practice, the danger to be averted seems to lie mainly in the possibility that the poet's fabrications could detract from the pupil's spiritual health by making him experience undesirable emotions: if he realizes that his fear, indignation or tears concern events that have not really happened, he will be able to protect himself against the emotional impact of what he is shown.

The (unintended?) consequence of the emotional reserve to be instilled in the pupil is of course that poetry is deprived of the very effects the poets allegedly wanted to achieve. Those who are taught to read in the way advocated by Plutarch, do not combine business with pleasure, but learn to arm themselves against the pleasures as well as the dangers of reading because they know better.

According to Plutarch, poets are particularly dangerous when they *unwittingly* tell what is not true, because they themselves do not know better. It is in such cases that their ability to inspire belief can do the greatest damage. Here too, the risk appears to lie mainly in the emotional impact of things that do not exist or that the philosopher knows to be different from the way the poet represents them. The narrow-minded condescension of the type of philosopher Plutarch has in mind reveals itself in the pupil being advised to realize that even philosophers find it extremely difficult to track the truth: when he is aware of this, he will be less easily misled by the fabrications of those who have not even tried really to understand things.

2.2. A second consideration which is to enhance the pupil's capacity for critical reading is the knowledge that literature is mimetic. Plutarch says that what he means by this is more than is directly apparent from the commonplace *ut pictura poesis*. The point he wants to make is that literature as an imitation pleasantly affects the reader not by 'what' it does, but by 'how' it does this. We enjoy looking at a true-to-life picture of a lizard, an ape or of Thersites, not because these are pleasant things to look at, but because they have been represented so aptly: depicting an ugly being as a beautiful thing would violate the

requirements of *πρέπον* and *εἰκός*. Likewise, in portrayals of events such as Medea's infanticide, it is not the event itself that inspires admiration, but the craftsmanship of the maker who has represented his subject *προσηκόντως*.

The words that have been left untranslated are somewhat surprising in this context. Their use in ethical and stylistic contexts aside, the term *εἰκός* is used in literary theory and rhetoric for the intrinsic probability of a plot or of the speaker's account of events (is it plausible that this personage acts in this way in this situation?); *πρέπον* is mainly used for a personage's character being in accordance with his/her age, social position, sex, &c. For Plutarch's argument, the terms are, strictly speaking, superfluous: after all, the portrayal of an ugly person as a handsome one simply falls short as a representation.

The explanation of the unnecessary detour seems to lie in Plutarch's wish to take the comparison between visual arts and literature further than it allows. What he apparently wants to say is that, if literary personages do wrong deeds, or display violent emotions or a bad character, the pupil should not admire these personages for what they are doing and saying, but rather admire the poet for having depicted them in a way that is true-to-life in that it suits (*ἐναρμόττον, οἰκεῖον*) their moral character. The pupil must be aware that to imitate an ugly thing *καλῶς* is different from representing it as a *καλόν*.

This 'lesson' is illustrated in a more straightforward way by yet another comparison: sounds that are unpleasant in reality, such as a pig's cry or the squeaking of a windlass, when imitated well, are amusing. The same is true for literature: it is not the moral character or the behaviour of a Thersites or a Sisyphus that one should admire, but their faithful representation: bad deeds just happen to suit bad people. One's ethical edification can only be served by this insight: if a certain personage is inferior, the poet's true-to-life portrait will make it perfectly clear that the personage is not to be admired but to be condemned.

It can no longer be determined with certainty whether Plutarch knew Aristotle's *Poetics*; those elements in his treatise that seem reminiscent of Aristotle may have come to him indirectly, or he may have found them in Aristotle's lost dialogue Περὶ ποιητῶν. It seems, however, undeniable that Plutarch's application of the concept of *μίμησις* is a far cry from what we find in Aristotle. The idea that a successful imitation as such is something people gain pleasure from, is one we know indeed from the *Poetics* (1448b8 ff.), where it is mentioned in

order to account for the fact that human beings are inclined to μίμησις at all. This does not mean however that, for Aristotle, the pleasure that goes with a successful imitation as such – which he characterizes as a matter of the intellect (1448b15: "the reason of the delight in seeing the picture is that one is at the same time learning, gathering the meaning of things, e.g. that the man there is so-and-so") – would play a main role in his analysis of the effects of literature. Nor would it for Plato, who supplied Aristotle with the point of departure of his analysis: that the ἡδονή which is the characteristic result of tragedy and epic derives from the emotions experienced by the audience.

However, instead of disqualifying Plutarch's ability to understand what Plato (and Aristotle) meant to say, we may account for his rather high-handed way of extracting what he needed from its context, by taking it that he wanted to have it both ways: to adhere to Plato's identification of μίμησις as the defining mark of ποίησις and at the same time to minimize the dangers Plato saw in the emotional impact of literature. By this compromise he created for himself a minimum of room for allowing young pupils to read poetry without all too patently distancing himself from Plato. One may observe that, in doing so, he paid the price of both grossly misrepresenting the artistic purposes of many poets, and – what is even more remarkable – denying adult readers any independent reason they might have to continue and intensify their reading of poetry.

2.2.1. The chapters on ψεῦδος and μίμησις in literature I have discussed so far are intended to provide a basis for a number of practical instructions for school reading: by confronting various statements with each other, and by carefully scrutinizing single words and expressions, the pupil will be able to discover that the poet himself had an intention which may be regarded as positive, even though at first sight this does not seem to be so. Plutarch advises, for instance, to teach the pupil to be alert to the possibility that the poets themselves often implicitly or explicitly express a judgement on the behaviour or statements of their characters. This may happen in the immediate context, but it may also become apparent when one compares passages from different contexts.

The examples from Homer Plutarch uses to illustrate this method seem to presuppose some familiarity with the complete *Iliad* and *Odyssey*; the examples from tragedies, however, are often taken from plays we know were no longer read in school, and they seldom give the impression of the author being familiar with the complete plays

they have been taken from. It may even be doubted whether Plutarch himself actually knew all of the tragedies and comedies from which he quotes, other than from anthologies, quotation books or compilations of the *Tales from Shakespeare* type. Correcting statements are often taken from outside the immediate context in which the harmful ideas occur, sometimes even from other poets – which indicates that the reading practice referred to was only partly directed towards the reading of complete literary works. This seems to be confirmed by the observation that a substantial part of the quotes fits a type of education that aims at familiarizing pupils with unusual words and training them to recognize the various stylistic devices to be distinguished in the theory of rhetoric.

2.3. In chapter 7 of his treatise, Plutarch returns to the foundations he has laid in chapters 2 and 3. He explains that the mimetic character of poetry compels the poets to curb their inclination to embellish their events and characters, because, for the sake of credibility (*πιθανόν*), they have to take life as it is as their guide. For that reason, we encounter *both* good and bad in the poetic world. The Stoics may be unwordly enough to think that the wise are flawless, but Homer and Euripides were well aware that good people normally have some bad, and bad people some good characteristics.

Next to the motive of credibility, which prevents the poet from representing perfectly admirable characters, there is also the poet's need for variation: after all, the reversals of fortune in the story both shock and entertain the audience (*ἔκπληξις καὶ χάρις*), while a plot without any reversal (*ἁπλοῦν*) will leave the audience unaffected. This is why poets avoid the representation of people who are constantly fortunate or successful. Even the gods, as they are depicted in literature, show emotions and make mistakes, because conflicts and dangers are indispensable ingredients of a plot that is to arouse the spectator's emotions.

Here too, elements we know from Aristotle are near, but in a version that lacks the close coherence of Aristotle's analysis. For Aristotle, what is required of the *ἦθος* of the personages is completely based on 'technical' reasons: when we are shown the misfortunes of a person who, from a moral point of view, is flawless, this will block rather than evoke the emotions that are characteristic of tragedy. Plutarch, however, seems to regard the presence of less admirable traits in literary personages as a concession: for the sake of the reader's ethical education, it would be preferable to depict model characters that are

fully worth imitating, but one cannot really expect this of the poet because it would both detract from the credibility of his plot and make it boring instead of entertaining.

Similarly, the idea that it is the unexpected that moves the audience and that therefore reversals of fortune are required, is not unfamiliar to Aristotle. He, however, requires that the unexpected also necessarily follows from the preceding: ἔλεος and φόβος occur particularly when the events both are παρὰ τὴν δόξαν and turn out to have occurred δι' ἄλληλα (1452a4). For Plutarch, it is the need for variation *as such* which requires μεταβολαί. Accordingly, the effect on the audience is not found in the emotions of 'fear' and 'pity' but in ἔκπληξις and χάρις: the audience loves being impressed forcefully by what is unexpected and startling. So once more, isolated Aristotelian concepts are placed in the context of the analysis that constituted Plato's frame of reference for justifying his condemnation of literature. For describing how the audience is carried away by the poet, Plutarch uses the term τὸ ἀγωγόν, which reminds one of the concept of ψυχαγωγία by which Gorgias described the poet's and the rhetorician's capacity for manipulating his audience's response.

In accordance with his preoccupation with the moral aspects of education, Plutarch's analysis of the variety the poets strive for, concerns not so much the plot as the character of the personages: because τὸ ἁπλοῦν has to be avoided, the poet seeks to provide variation by subjecting his personages to misfortune. From an ethical point of view, they should be models of virtue, but making them perfect would deprive the poet of any basis for diversity and conflict. Now, apart from the fact that it may well be doubted whether one should teach one's pupils that committing mistakes is the main cause of human misfortune, it is clear that this way of making the characteristics of the plot dependent upon the moral character of the personages is the exact reverse of Aristotle's treatment of the relation between character and plot. Here also, Plato looms in the background, with his disapproval of the μίμησις of gods and heroes as quarreling, enraged and weeping, which he decries as philosophically impossible and inspiring misguided ethical beliefs and undesirable emotions.

2.3.1. Plutarch's elaboration of the results of μίμησις and ψεῦδος as characteristics of poetic activity in chapter 7, creates the basis for a second series of practical instructions, which focuses first on the observation and evaluation of the literary personages in which good and bad occur side by side (ch. 8), and next on the comparison of the

various personages represented in the poems (ch. 10). From chapter 11 onwards, the main issue of the argument shifts from the *dramatis personae* to the virtues and vices as such. Everything is directed towards the improvement of the ethical makeup of the reader, who, if he organizes his reading according to Plutarch's instructions, will acquire the moderation and magnanimity (μετριότης, μεγαλοφροσύνη) that philosophical education aims to establish.

From chapter 8 onwards, the examples cited presuppose, to a greater extent than before, the reading of complete poems. In accordance with school practice, once again, the quotations are mainly taken from Homer. From the tragedians, mostly miscellaneous quotations are used – with a lyric poet emerging here and there, which strictly speaking takes us outside the domain of ποίησις as it was defined by Plato and Aristotle. In this part of the treatise, the author apparently is primarily concerned with the more advanced pupil, who has completed the phase of introductory reading and collecting quotations, and whose ability to make ethical judgements has already been partly formed.

3. The actual effect of following the instructions provided both in the first and the second part of the treatise is much the same: the pupil must be taught to read literature as if it were not literature. If he learns to see through the goals and methods of the poets, he will be able to benefit from their works as if they were ethical treatises enlivened by poetic means. This is precisely what Plutarch wanted to illustrate with the quote from Philoxenus (τῶν κρεῶν τὰ μὴ κρέα ἥδιστα) in the introduction to his treatise: "fish and meat taste best if they have been prepared in such a way that they do not appear as such." Similarly, the poet is made to communicate what is deemed valuable by a philosopher, in such a way that the pupil will swallow it easily – although it seems rather questionable whether the recipe will have the intended effect: preparing meat in such a way that it is 'disguised' as something else, after all boils down to denaturing your meal into something that is neither meat nor fish.

As observed, Plutarch's point of departure is the Platonic judgement on ποίησις as being harmful, and therefore to be banned from society, and *a fortiori* from the education of the Guardians in his ideal State. His wish to mitigate this rigorous position, if not to abandon it, seems to have been inspired by his wish not so much to defend literature as not to be forced to exclude his and his friend's children from

normal educational practice. The crucial sentence has already been referred to above: "because it is most probably not possible and also not useful to cut off children of the age of my Soclarus and your Cleandrus from poetry," their reading needs to be carefully coached and monitored. Where Plato took the consequence of a rigorous ban, Plutarch tries to find a compromise for the benefit of children who do not live in a society based on the Platonic model, nor have to become full-blown philosophers.

All in all, it can be said that Plutarch fully subscribes to Plato's diagnosis: poets cannot help serving their audience's need for entertainment and sensation, and epic and tragic poetry therefore may easily instil wrong ideas in the minds of their readers; it will make them imitate practices they should reject and, last but not least, will allow them to be carried away by emotions instead of following the directions of their intellect. He sought to escape from the rigorous consequences of Plato's analysis of literature – which was designed to bring out its dangers – by supplementing it with other elements from the tradition. These elements partly remind one of opinions that originate with Gorgias and have remained part of the rhetorical analysis of stylistic devices and their effect. Other ideas remind one of Aristotle. The eclectic mixture Plutarch produces is incoherent, and more than once defeats the intentions of those from whom he borrowed its components. The bridge he attempted to build between philosophy and literature, when one removes the plaster, appears to consist of ill-fitted blocks and threatens to collapse at any time. Those who manage to cross it safe and sound may wonder whether they have arrived in the groves of literature or in the nursery of a schoolmaster, in which the taxonomy of the plants and their edibility are more important than their aesthetic effect. The garden of the Muses turns out to be a vegetable garden.

That Plutarch, in his own opinion, had satisfactorily solved the dilemma of the philosopher as educator of his children becomes apparent in his conclusion. The way of reading poetry he has advocated is a kind of introduction to philosophy: it will help the pupil to turn his mind towards objects that are more real than the 'shadows' the uneducated take for reality itself.

> This way of connecting and reconciling what poets say with the doctrines of philosophy, takes literature outside the realm of storytelling and acting, and enables one to take seriously those statements which one may benefit from. Thus one opens up the soul of the pupils and

> prepares them for what philosophy has to say. Their taste for philosophy will have been stimulated in an early phase of their development. They will have acquired the ability to discern, and their intellectual baggage will no longer exclusively consist of what they have heard from their mother and their wet nurse, or even their father and their pedagogue, who all honour the rich and call them fortunate, tremble with fear of death and misery, and regard virtue without riches and fame as undesirable and worthless. When young people are confronted with the ideas of philosophers that contradict all this, they tend to be shocked, confused and amazed. They will refuse to accept or even bear it, unless – *and we may compare their situation to that of people who leave utter darkness to enter into direct light* – they have spent some time in a reflected light, where the bright shine of truth is softened and mixed with poetic stories: this will help them to get used to bearing this sort of thing, and not to run from it. (36D-E)

The (italicized) reference to the cave simile from Plato's *Politeia*, clearly shows that the Platonist in Plutarch has a clear conscience, at least with regard to philosophy. Poets have long since been used to being exploited for all kinds of purposes, including those of the schoolmaster and the vicar. Fortunately, they have proved able to take it.

PERICLES' FUNERAL ORATION AND LAST SPEECH AS POLITICAL DOCUMENTS[1]

So that in the first place, I put for a general inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power, that ceaseth only in death. And the cause of this is not always that a man hopes for a more intensive delight, than he has already attained to; or that he cannot be content with a moderate power: but because he cannot assure the power and means to live well, which he hath present, without the acquisition of more.

(Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* XI)

1. *The problem*

In his essay *On Thucydides*, Dionysius of Halicarnassus questions Thucydides' decision to make Pericles' Funeral Oration the conclusion of his narrative of the first year of the Peloponnesian war. He observes that the Athenians who fell in this year were quite few in number, and that these few had done nothing memorable. "Why ever, then, does the historian lay open the public tombs for a few cavalry-men who earned no glory and no power for the city, and introduce the most illustrious public orator, Pericles, to enact his performance of high tragedy?" Dionysius considers it likely "that the historian himself composed this funeral eulogy and assigned it to Pericles because he wished to make full use of his character; and since that statesman died during the second year of the war and did not witness any of the misfortunes that befell the city after that time, he reserves this minor and uninspiring event for him to adorn with exaggerated praise."[2]

Although nobody seems to have gone as far as to maintain with Dionysius that, in 430, Pericles did not even appear on the platform,[3] the view that the content of the funeral speech must be attributed to Thucydides and not to Pericles has many adherents.[4] It has been

---

[1] My thanks are due to Toni Raubitschek and to my Leiden colleagues Harry Pleket and Marlein van Raalte: their comments on an earlier version of this article at some points made me rethink what I had written; at other points they helped to improve and clarify my argument. It goes without saying that I alone remain responsible for my text in its present form.

[2] *De Thucydide* 18, translation Usher.

[3] See, however, the quotation from Stadter 1973 p. 139 below.

[4] For a short survey of the discussion up to 1961 see Kakridis 6. Cf. also Loraux.

argued for extensively by Kakridis.[5] He considers it inconceivable that the general purport of the speech should originate with Pericles. In his view the speech is addressed not to the Athenians of 430, but to Thucydides' own reading public: "a humbled, incredulous and envious generation, who doubted not only the wisdom of Pericles' imperial policy but the value of Athenian civilization itself as it had been created by the men of an earlier age."[6]

As some of Kakridis' strongest arguments rest on the introduction to the speech (II.35), it will be convenient to quote this passage *in extenso*.

> Most of those who have spoken here before me have commended the lawgiver who added this speech to our other funeral customs; it seemed to them a worthy thing that such an honour should be given at their burial to the dead who have fallen on the field of battle. But I should have preferred that, when men's deeds have been brave, their worth should be shown in deed only, with this public funeral, which you are now witnessing. The belief in the courage of so many should not be hazarded on the eloquence of one man. For it is difficult to say neither too little nor too much, when there is hardly a safe common ground even for one's assessment of the truth. For those who know by experience and are well-disposed are likely to think that what is set forth falls short of their knowledge and of their wishes. Others, who themselves have no experience, when they hear of anything which surpasses their own powers, will be envious and will suspect exaggeration. Mankind are tolerant of the praises of others so long as each hearer thinks that he can do as well or nearly as well himself; once one gets beyond this point, jealousy is aroused and people become incredulous. However, since our ancestors have set the seal of their approval upon the practice, I must obey, and to the utmost of my ability shall endeavour to satisfy the wishes and beliefs of every one of you.[7]

---

[5] "Daß der Epitaphios keine treue Wiedergabe der von Perikles im Winter 430 wirklich gehaltenen Rede, sondern von dem greisen Thukydides nach 404 frei konzipiert ist, gehört m.E. zu den sichersten Ergebnissen der neueren Thukydidesanalyse." (5-6)

[6] Quoted from Gomme's summing up of Kakridis' position (II, 104).

[7] (1) *οἱ μὲν πολλοὶ τῶν ἐνθάδε ἤδη εἰρηκότων ἐπαινοῦσι τὸν προσθέντα τῷ νόμῳ τὸν λόγον τόνδε, ὡς καλὸν ἐπὶ τοῖς ἐκ τῶν πολέμων θαπτομένοις ἀγορεύεσθαι αὐτόν. ἐμοὶ δὲ ἀρκοῦν ἂν ἐδόκει εἶναι ἀνδρῶν ἀγαθῶν ἔργῳ γενομένων ἔργῳ καὶ δηλοῦσθαι τὰς τιμάς, οἷα καὶ νῦν περὶ τὸν τάφον τόνδε δημοσίᾳ παρασκευασθέντα ὁρᾶτε, καὶ μὴ ἐν ἑνὶ ἀνδρὶ πολλῶν ἀρετὰς κινδυνεύεσθαι εὖ τε καὶ χεῖρον εἰπόντι πιστευθῆναι.* (2) *χαλεπὸν γὰρ τὸ μετρίως εἰπεῖν ἐν ᾧ μόλις καὶ ἡ δόκησις τῆς ἀληθείας βεβαιοῦται. ὅ τε γὰρ ξυνειδὼς καὶ εὔνους ἀκροατὴς τάχ' ἄν τι ἐνδεεστέρως πρὸς ἃ βούλεταί τε καὶ ἐπίσταται νομίσειε δηλοῦσθαι, ὅ τε ἄπειρος ἔστιν ἃ καὶ πλεονάζεσθαι, διὰ φθόνον, εἴ τι ὑπὲρ τὴν αὑτοῦ φύσιν ἀκούοι. μέχρι γὰρ τοῦδε ἀνεκτοὶ οἱ ἔπαινοί εἰσι περὶ ἑτέρων λεγόμενοι, ἐς ὅσον ἂν καὶ αὐτὸς ἕκαστος οἴηται ἱκανὸς εἶναι δρᾶσαί τι ὧν ἤκουσεν· τῷ δὲ ὑπερβάλλοντι αὐτῶν φθονοῦντες ἤδη καὶ*

As Kakridis rightly remarks, this is a surprising *captatio benevolentiae*. Traditionally,[8] a funeral orator would plead that his eloquence is far from sufficient to do full justice to the exploits he has to praise. Pericles, however, is concerned, not whether he will be able to speak adequately (ἱκανῶς, ἀξίως), but whether he will manage to speak μετρίως, because he sees himself in danger of either exaggerating or depreciating.[9] Part of his audience may indeed find that he undervalues the performance of those who were killed in action, but he focuses on the others, who will not believe him and who will find that he is exaggerating.[10] According to Kakridis it is impossible to imagine the real Pericles actually distinguishing among his mourning audience these

---

ἀπιστοῦσιν. (3) ἐπειδὴ δὲ τοῖς πάλαι οὕτως ἐδοκιμάσθη ταῦτα καλῶς ἔχειν, χρὴ καὶ ἐμὲ τῷ νόμῳ πειρᾶσθαι ὑμῶν τῆς ἑκάστου βουλήσεώς τε καὶ δόξης τυχεῖν ὡς ἐπὶ πλεῖστον. (II.35. Translations from Thucydides are adapted from Jowett's translation)

[8] The point, of course, being, not whether *we* nowadays can imagine a funeral orator speaking like Pericles, but what impression his words will have made on the audience of 430. That Pericles is indeed deviating here from what was expected from a funeral orator is shown by all the other specimina that have come to us:

Cf. Lys. II.1-2: εἰ μὲν ἡγούμην οἷόν τε εἶναι ... λόγῳ δηλῶσαι τὴν τῶν ἐνθάδε κειμένων ἀνδρῶν ἀρετήν, ἐμεμψάμην ἂν τοῖς ἐπαγγείλασιν ἐξ ὀλίγων ἡμερῶν λέγειν· ἐπειδὴ δὲ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ὁ πᾶς χρόνος οὐχ ἱκανὸς λόγον ἴσον παρασκευάσαι τοῖς τούτων ἔργοις, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ ἡ πόλις μοι δοκεῖ, προνοουμένη τῶν ἐνθάδε λεγόντων, ἐξ ὀλίγου τὴν πρόσταξιν ποιεῖσθαι, ἡγουμένη οὕτως ἂν μάλιστα συγγνώμης αὐτοὺς παρὰ τῶν ἀκουσάντων τυγχάνειν. Plat. *Menex.* 236e3-4: δεῖ δὴ τοιούτου τινὸς λόγου ὅστις τοὺς μὲν τετελευτηκότας ἱκανῶς ἐπαινέσεται. Dem. LX.1: ἐπειδὴ τοὺς ἐν τῷδε τῷ τάφῳ κειμένους, ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ γεγονότας, ἔδοξεν τῇ πόλει δημοσίᾳ θάπτειν καὶ προσέταξεν ἐμοὶ τὸν νομιζόμενον λόγον εἰπεῖν ἐπ' αὐτοῖς, ἐσκόπουν μὲν εὐθὺς ὅπως τοῦ προσήκοντος ἐπαίνου τεύξονται, ἐξετάζων δὲ καὶ σκοπῶν ἀξίως εἰπεῖν τῶν τετελευτηκότων ἕν τι τῶν ἀδυνάτων ηὕρισκον ὄν. Hyperid. VI.2: διὸ καὶ μάλιστα φοβοῦμαι, μή μοι συμβῇ τὸν λόγον ἐλάττω φαίνεσθαι τῶν ἔργων τῶν γεγενημένων. πλὴν κατ' ἐκεῖνό γε θαρρῶ ὅτι τὰ ὑπ' ἐμοῦ παραλειπόμενα ὑμεῖς οἱ ἀκούοντες προσθήσετε· οὐ γὰρ ἐν τοῖς τυχοῦσιν οἱ λόγοι ῥηθήσονται, ἀλλ' ἐν αὐτοῖς τοῖς μάρτυσι τῶν ἐκείνοις πεπραγμένων.

[9] Cf. the parallels cited by Liddell-Scott-Jones *s.v.* μετρίως (Pl. *Resp.* 518b, *Theaet.* 191d, Isocr. 12.171).

[10] The word order of the final part of Ch. 35,1 is so designed as to bring out the departure from the traditional topos *facta dictis exaequanda*: it is only when we reach the last word of the sentence, πιστευθῆναι, that we become aware that we are not going to get what we were led to expect. This is confirmed by the way μετρίως (instead of the expected ἱκανῶς or ἀξίως) is elaborated: only part of the audience will judge the orator by normal standards; the others will not, and the rest of 35.2 is devoted to their motivation for not believing what is said – ἀπιστοῦσι again being the prominent last word of the sentence. In a text as concentrated as ours, this way of presentation, together with the parallels cited above, makes it very likely that Thucydides wanted his readers to notice that something special was going on.

two groups: one which was prepared to believe him when he praised the valour of the dead, and another which was not. Nor could he have ascribed the disbelief of the latter to envy of exploits that went beyond their own powers.

This presents us with a real problem: an Athenian funeral orator who expects part of his audience not to believe him and to begrudge those who died in action the praise they deserve is an odd phenomenon indeed. But it will not do to make Thucydides himself responsible for the speech. We have, of course, to acknowledge that his statement of method in I.22 leaves some – perhaps even considerable – room for adaptation of the content of at least some of the actual speeches. It must, however, be doubted whether the statement in any interpretation leaves the historian – himself almost certainly among Pericles' audience – free to write a speech which is in every respect his own composition,[11] let alone a speech which contains elements that – if they are rightly considered to be completely inappropriate to the situation at hand – can hardly belong even to the admittedly elusive class of *τὰ δέοντα*.[12] We are faced, then, with a dilemma: either Thucydides promised one thing and practised another, or he did intend to keep as close as possible (*ὅτι ἐγγύτατα*) to the general purport (*ξύμπασα γνώμη*) of what was actually said. In the latter case, substantial departures from the *ξύμπασα γνώμη* of what Pericles said are out of the question.

In his commentary, Gomme emphatically rejects Kakridis' interpretation.[13] In defense of the problematic passages he points out (1) that "no body of men has ever been so conscious of envy and its workings as the Greeks,"[14] and (2) that "the Greeks, and Thucydides in

---

[11] Some scholars (e.g. Flashar) are prepared to accept that Thucydides' role can extend as far as inventing whole speeches or combining several speeches into one. I would agree with Kagan 65: "Whoever can believe that the Funeral Oration is a free composition of Thucydides is free to believe that there was no public funeral in Athens in 431 or that the Spartans never invaded Attica during the war."

[12] Translated by Gomme "what they had to say", but frequently interpreted as: "what was needed", "what was called for in the circumstances". Proctor (153) prefers the reading *τῶν ἀληθῶς λεγόντων* and translates: "So, while keeping as close as possible to the general intention of those who actually [*ἀληθῶς* ?] spoke, I have made the several parties say what in my view would have met best the requirements of the situation". For the whole discussion see also Luschnat 1169 ff.

[13] Gomme refers to the first, Greek, edition of Kakridis' monograph (Athens 1941).

[14] This may be true as far as it goes – but one doubts whether, even in a highly competitive society, envy towards fallen soldiers would be considered a commendable feeling: cf., for instance, Isocr. *Euag.* 190 (possibly an allusion to Pericles' introduction): *τούτων δ' αἴτιος ὁ φθόνος, ᾧ τοῦτο μόνον ἀγαθὸν πρόσεστιν ὅτι μέγιστον κακὸν τοῖς ἔχουσιν*

particular, had a passion for covering all the ground in their generalizations, *not always relevantly*" (my italics). Finally, he seeks to account for what is startling in the first chapter of the speech by remarking that "the unusual, almost paradoxical sophistic of this chapter, the love of generalization, finds its place more easily in the age of Euripides, Protagoras and Prodicus" than in the years after 404.[15]

This is disappointing. Even an excessive love of generalization and paradox fails to explain why Pericles would have risked to offend part of his audience by accusing them of lack of generosity and of envy towards soldiers who deserve praise for their readiness to die for their city. Although Gomme actually admits that he considers some of Thucydides' sentences less than pertinent to the situation Pericles found himself in, in the end he does little more than testify to his belief in the reliability of the historian: "The whole tone, so proud and confident (...) *surely* belongs to the thirties of the fifth century (...); and if the speech is Thucydides' own composition and written after 404 it is a remarkable projection back to the spirit of the earlier generation" (my italics).[16] As I am not aware of any successful attempt to account for the difficulties indicated by Kakridis it may prove worthwhile to see whether we can understand Pericles' introduction as it is presented to us before we decide that it either contains some pieces of senseless and rather frigid rhetoric or is a free composition by Thucydides himself.

2. *Pericles' audience*

Dionysius' evaluation of the outcome of the first year of the war seems correct.[17] The Athenians did not succeed in striking a significant blow

---

ἔστιν. οὕτω γάρ τινες δυσκόλως πεφύκασιν, ὥσθ' ἥδιον ἂν εὐλογουμένων ἀκούοιεν οὓς οὐκ ἴσασιν εἰ γεγόνασιν ἢ τούτων ὑφ' ὧν εὖ πεπονθότες αὐτοὶ τυγχάνουσιν. οὐ μὴν δουλευτέον τοὺς νοῦν ἔχοντας τοῖς οὕτω κακῶς φρονοῦσιν. Moreover, the point is not that Pericles reckons with the possibility of envy as such, but that he uses it in order to explain the disbelief of *part* of his audience.

[15] Gomme II, 102-4. [16] Gomme II, 130.

[17] For a discussion of the results of the first year of the war cf. Kagan 67-8. His concluding sentence ("For the moment the occupation of Aegina, the attack on the Megarid, and the eloquence of Pericles might quiet the opposition, but it was sure to burst forth if the situation did not improve. As the first year of the war came to an end the pressure on Pericles and his strategy increased.") seems, however, to underestimate the unrest which had occurred already in the first year (Thuc. II.21,2-3) and which had been serious enough to make Pericles avoid the risk of summoning an assembly (II.22,1).

to the Spartans on their own territory. As many as a hundred and fifty ships were despatched to the Peloponnesus: they attacked Methone, a weak and ungarrisoned fortress in Laconia. Brasidas came to the rescue with a hundred hoplites and successfully saved the place – an exploit which was publicly acknowledged at Sparta.[18] Having thus been thwarted in their most important objective the Athenians proceeded to ravage some territory in Elis. Here they did not meet any Spartan hoplites "and defeated three hundred chosen men from the vale of Elis, as well as some Elean perioeci from the neighbourhood who came to the rescue." But a violent storm arose and, there being no harbour in which the fleet could find shelter, they sailed to the North-West (Thuc. II.25). Without fighting they gained Cephallenia and some towns on the Acarnanian coast (II.30). Apart from these operations it proved necessary to protect vital Athenian interests in Euboea against the Locrians by capturing Thronion and making an uninhabited island nearby a guard station in order to protect Euboea against further attacks by sea (II.26 & 32).

The judgement of those who had been opposed to the war cannot have been favourable. After all, when advocating his strategy Pericles had promised something much grander:

> If the Spartans attack our country by land, we shall attack theirs by sea, and the devastation, even of part of the Peloponnese will be a very different thing from that of all Attica. For they, if they want fresh territory, they must take it by arms, whereas we have plenty of land both in the islands and on the continent. (Thuc. I.143.4)

Pericles' opponents cannot have failed to observe that only the unpleasant part of this prophecy had come true. Positive results were far from impressive, and certainly not impressive enough to satisfy those who saw their property ruined and their land laid waste: they surely wanted to see real harm inflicted to the Spartans. The expansion to the North-West did not compensate for what they sorely missed, while the ravaging of Megara (Thuc. II.31) looked like an attempt to serve the interests of Athenian commerce rather than to harm the Spartans: after all, those who had been opposed to the war had regarded the trade-conflict with Megara as a trifle not worth a war (I.140,4). Under-

---

[18] Cf. II.39,3: *ἢν δέ που μορίῳ τινὶ προσμείξωσι, κρατήσαντές τέ τινας ἡμῶν πάντας αὐχοῦσιν ἀπεῶσθαι καὶ νικηθέντες ὑφ' ἁπάντων ἡσσῆσθαι.* The sceptics among Pericles' audience will have observed that the second part of this statement had so far failed to materialize.

standably, the critics of Periclean strategy found it increasingly difficult to understand why Pericles persisted in refusing battle with the Spartan hoplites. As Plutarch tells us

> Pericles tried to calm down those who were eager to fight, and who were in distress at what the enemy was doing, by saying that trees, though cut and lopped, grew quickly, but if men were destroyed it was not easy to get them again. (*Vita Periclis* XXXIII.4-5)[19]

The quotation is meant by Plutarch as an example of Pericles' famous eloquence, but the words may well have done little or nothing to calm the peasants; after their experiences in the Persian wars they knew only too well that, once their vines and olive trees had been demolished, it would take some time before these would yield fruit again. Pericles' deliberate lack of appreciation of agrarian concerns has, however, the ring of truth: one remembers, for instance, his last speech, where he points out that, compared to Athenian naval power, "houses and lands, of which the loss seems so dreadful to you, are as nothing. We ought not to be troubled about them or to think much of them in comparison; they are only the pleasure garden of the house, the superfluous ornament of wealth." (Thuc. II.62,3) Even spoken by one who himself possessed land in Attica these words must have made those who worked and lived in this 'garden' doubt as to whether they were being treated as full citizens in their own right.

Let me try to be more specific about those who supported and those who opposed Pericles' decisions. According to the author of the *Constitution of the Athenians*,[20] the sea-power of Athens and the war-strategy advocated by Pericles were closely connected with democracy.

---

[19] Translations from Plutarch are adapted from Perrin's Loeb translation.

[20] Although we can only speculate about the identity of the author of this treatise, there is much to be said for Bowersock's suggestion (1920, 465): "Possibly the treatise (...) should be associated with the ostracism of Thucydides, the son of Melesias, in 443." It even seems probable that the ostracized politician himself is the author of the treatise. It may have been written at some date between 443 and 431. This would agree 1) with the impression that the author is an Athenian living abroad; 2) with his illustrating what he has to say by events to be dated before 443; and 3) with some passages referring to the situation shortly before the Peloponnesian war (e.g. II.16, III.2, where περὶ τοῦ πολέμου does not necessarily indicate that there was a war going on, and is most easily understood if at the moment of writing there was a war looming). This would also explain the omission of the Samian revolt – taken by Bowersock to indicate a *terminus ante quem* of 441.

> It is only just that the poor and the common folk (ὁ δῆμος) should have more influence than the noble and the rich, for it is the common folk that build, keep in repair and row the ships, and by doing so make the city powerful, not the hoplites and the well-born and the worthy. (I.2)[21]

This, of course, constitutes an over-simplified and biased picture of Athenian society,[22] but it seems equally biased to assume – as some modern historians tend to do – that it had no basis in reality at all. Besides those mentioned by the 'Old Oligarch',[23] there must have been indeed many others – such as those who rented lodgings to the many allies who visited Athens,[24] shop-keepers, small traders, handicraftsmen &c. – who had an interest in supporting the Periclean policy and war-strategy, at least so long as it proved reasonably successful.

According to the 'Old Oligarch', the others were inclined to compromise with the Spartans (Ps.-Xen. II.14). First there were the wealthy and well-born (Thucydides calls them *δυνατοί*):[25] those who were more or less big landowners and had no interests overseas had little to gain by a war against Sparta, and they will hardly have applauded the decision to leave Attica open to Peloponnesian raids.[26] There were, however, also those the 'Old Oligarch' designates as hoplites (*e.g.* I.2) and agrarians (γεωργοῦντες) (II.14).[27] The hoplites were

---

[21] Translations from ps.-Xenophon are adapted from Bowersock's Loeb translation.

[22] For a discussion of the distinctions between the different groups in Athenian society see Forrest 21 ff.. He rightly modifies an all too easy division of the Athenian population into "the rich, the rural people and the urban proletariat", and especially opposes to characterizing the 'demos' as a kind of urban proletariat: "The average Athenian was an independent property-owner, in the city an artisan, a trader, a shop-keeper or a manufacturer, in the country-town or village, an artisan, a shopkeeper or, more often, a farmer." In the context of the present argument I would, however, underline his statement (p. 22) that "when military questions were to the fore men cared to what class they belonged and behaved according to the military interests of their class." For the situation in 430 it is, moreover, important that these distinctions (such as those between hoplites and thetes, between countrymen and town-dwellers) "mattered from time to time in politics as issues affecting different groups arose" (Forrest 26) – the evaluation of the Periclean war strategy and its results being precisely one of these issues.

[23] The oarsmen may have been a less homogeneous group than the 'Old Oligarch' seems to acknowledge: at least part of them may have been recruited from the agrarian population, spending in the navy only the part of the year between sowing and harvesting. [24] Cf. ps.-Xen. I.17.

[25] For instance at II.65,2.

[26] Cf. Thuc. II.65,1, quoted below p. 137.

[27] This, again, does not imply that one could have drawn clear dividing lines between these groups.

mainly recruited from the agrarian population of Attica, and their military significance and prestige suffered heavily from Pericles' decision to put all his cards on the much-boasted superiority of the Athenian fleet. The 'Old Oligarch' tells us (II.1) that the Athenian 'demos' had come to consider the infantry to be sufficient as long as it was superior to the armed forces of the Athenian allies. This may be an exaggeration, but the concentration on the fleet must have aroused the discontent and frustration of those who felt themselves the descendants of the victors of Marathon. They had never wanted the war, but now that it was going on they were ready to fight, if only in order to protect their own property:

> But when they saw the army around Acharnia (...) they made out that it was no longer to be borne (...) and when their territory was wasted in full view (...) this appeared a terrible thing, and it seemed to them – and most of all to the young – that they should not allow it, but should go out and fight. And assembling in little groups, they were in great contention, some urging attack, and others not allowing it. (...) And the Acharnians, considering among themselves that they were not the smallest part of the Athenians, and since it was their territory being wasted, proposed the attack most vigorously.[28] And the city was in every manner of excitement, and they were angry with Pericles (...) and said reproachfully that he was the general but would not lead them out, and they held him responsible for everything they were suffering. (Thuc. II.21, 2-3)[29]

This was exactly the reaction the Spartans had hoped for. Archidamus had chosen the plain of Acharnae for his army camp precisely because the Acharnians, with their 3.000 hoplites,[30] were an important part of the Athenian polis: he hoped that they would not tolerate the destruction of their property, and thus would force their fellow-Athenians to make a sortie. "And if the Athenians did not come out (...) he (Archidamus) could henceforward ravage the plain with more confidence, and march right up to the walls of the city." (II.20,4)

---

[28] Compare what Dicaeopolis says in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (509 ff.): "I detest the Spartans heartily, and may Poseidon (...) shake their houses and all-to topple them upon their heads; for I too am not unscathed: my poor vines have been cut down." (transl. Starkie)

[29] This description of the unrest caused by what was happening makes it clear that there actually was a recognizable group who were opposed to the way Pericles was conducting the war.

[30] I see no reason why, as Forrest (23) has it, we should consider this figure to be exaggerated.

Pericles, however, did not allow the hoplites to fight the Spartan invaders: he restricted himself to sending out from time to time a small detachment of horsemen[31] to prevent the Spartans from finding their way into the fields near the city. These were assisted by Thessalian cavalry and, when Boeotian infantry came up for support, they were compelled to flee. The Athenians even had to put up with the Peloponnesians raising a trophy within sight (Thuc. II.22,2). Moreover, the Athenian raids upon isolated points of the Peloponnese had been ineffective precisely because they were not supported by a sufficient body of heavy-armed infantry.

In preparing his Funeral Speech, then, Pericles had to reckon with two widely diverging reactions. Those who had participated in the military operations were well-disposed and willing to support his policy (*εὔνους*); they knew from their own experience (*ξυνειδότες*) what had been done, and may well have thought "that what was set forth fell short of what they liked to hear and what they knew." They wanted to hear about success and about the importance of what they had done, the more so since the results left much to be desired and exposed them to the contempt and disdain of the frustrated hoplites from the Attic countryside, who had not been allowed to defend Athenian territory. It seems, then, that the latter are the most likely candidates to figure as those who 'themselves have no experience' and who 'may feel that the orator is exaggerating'.

What may cause surprise is not that Pericles recognizes the existence of this group, but rather that he does nothing to reconcile them to the effects of the decisions he had stuck with. On the contrary, he seems to deliberately expose himself to the risk of further increasing their discontent. The only time he shows some consideration for their feelings is when he glosses over the Spartan victories by pointing out that the enemies have never felt the united strength of Athens: "if they meet and defeat a part of our army, they are as proud as if they had routed us all." (II.39,3) For the rest he adds fuel to the fire by accusing them of envy and bringing them under suspicion of lacking in military prowess.

With an experienced politician this can only mean one thing: Pericles must have calculated that in the situation at hand no priority should (or could) be given to securing the support of, or even to ap-

---

[31] For a discussion of the political *esprit de corps* of the cavalry 'class' at the time, see Bugh 74 ff.

peasing, the farmers and small land-owners, who in the past had served their city as hoplites. He must have diagnosed that, the outcome of the first year of the war not being what he had hoped for, cowing these opponents was a viable way of giving his supporters what they needed without seeing himself forced to present the disappointing outcome of the first war year as a major success, and thus to give the men of the fleet the self-satisfied feeling that they had done more than enough. Sharpening the discontent of his opponents was a – albeit 'Macchiavellistic' – way of providing the men of the fleet with the sting they needed to do their utmost, the more so since his opponents had every reason to rub it in that this way of conducting the war would never force the Spartans to their knees. He therefore decided to boost the morale of the soldiers he needed by pointing out to them that the lack of enthusiasm they met with the men of the country-side was prompted by the latter's self-interest and jealousy, thereby turning the criticism the soldiers were exposed to into an incentive to show what they were worth.

2.1. *Evidence from other speeches*

The assumption that this is what motivated Pericles to say precisely the things Kakridis and others have found surprising seems to be supported by some passages from other Periclean speeches. In his address to the Athenian assembly immediately before the beginning of the war Pericles characterizes the Spartans as "men who cultivate their own land (*αὐτοῦργοι*)" and who, therefore,

> are more ready to serve with their own persons than with their property; they do not despair of their lives, but they soon grow anxious lest their money should all be spent. (Thuc. I.141,5)[32]

By contrast he advises the Athenians to see themselves as islanders and to abandon their land and homes:

> What we should lament is not the loss of houses or of land, but the loss of men's lives. Men may gain these, but these will not gain men. (I.143,5)

To the agrarian population of Attica Pericles' characterization of the Spartans must have sounded like a description of their own way of

[32] This description of the Spartans reminds one of the speech held by the Corinthians in Sparta before the beginning of the war: "For they (i.e. the Athenians) hope to gain something by leaving their homes; but you (i.e. the Spartans) are afraid that any new enterprise may imperil what you have already." (I.70,4)

viewing the situation at hand: they must have felt inclined to act and feel precisely the way Pericles chooses to regard as typical of the Spartan enemies. It is easy to imagine how they felt when Pericles, in comparing Athenian and Spartan war potential, said:

> For we have acquired more experience of fighting on land through our naval operations than they have of sea fighting through their operations on land. (I.142,5)

thus reducing the proud traditions of Athenian infantry to something comparable to the Spartan ability to fight a battle at sea. Pericles even seems to add insult to injury by saying:

> If I thought I could persuade you to do it, I would urge you to go out and lay waste your property with your own hands and show the Peloponnesians that it is not for the sake of this that you are likely to give in to them. (I.143,5)

Such words can only have embittered the men who wanted to defend their property and to give hell to the Spartan infantry. To them Pericles' words must have sounded as a piece of easy and despicable rhetoric, meant to rouse the fighting spirit of those who could expect to draw profit from the war at the cost of the property of others. To those whose land was abandoned to the Spartans the slogan "we have plenty of land both in the islands and on the continent" meant that their legitimate interests were sacrificed to the advantage of others. Their valour and loyalty apparently were unimportant to a politician as long as he could count on a sufficient majority to carry through his policy without their support, or, for that matter, to a general who judged strengthening the morale of those serving in the fleet more important than ensuring the loyalty of the agrarian population, whose contribution to Athenian fighting potential he considered to be not essential anyway. Later on in his Funeral Speech Pericles even explicitly says so:

> Any one can discourse to you for ever about the advantages of a brave defence which you know already. But instead of listening to him I would have you day by day fix your eyes upon the greatness and power of Athens. (II.43,1)

2.2. *The Funeral Speech as a political statement*

Pericles' surprising *captatio benevolentiae,* then, appears to have been designed to ensure the continuing support and to increase the morale and self-confidence of those who so far had supported his policy, and

who were essential to his conception of a war which would force the Peloponnesians to accept the ascendancy of Athens as the mistress of a large empire. Surely it does not originate from love of generalization or paradox, nor is it due to Thucydides' wish to bring home to a later and disillusioned age the greatness and splendour it tended to disbelieve. It is best understood as the product of calculation by an experienced politician who considered this to be the most effective way of serving his first and foremost priority.

One clear indication that Pericles is speaking less as an epideictic[33] orator than as a politician[34] can be found in the way he justifies his decision to devote the major part of his speech to the Athenian political institutions and way of life instead of following the tradition by expatiating on the military exploits of earlier generations. He does so in a *praeteritio* which, again, can hardly have given much pleasure to those who loved to identify themselves with the glories of the past that are being passed over:

> Of the military exploits by which our various possessions were acquired, or of the energy with which we or our fathers drove back the tide of war, Hellenic or barbarian, I will not speak; for the tale would be long and is familiar to you.[35] But before I praise the dead, I should like to point out by what principles of action we rose to power, and under

---

[33] Immerwahr (27, n. 20) claims that the purpose of the Funeral Oration (as of epideictic orations in general) is didactic: "by describing an ideal state Pericles tries to persuade his audience to live accordingly. (...) The didactic purpose of the Thucydidean Funeral Oration is to achieve the unity of state and individual (note the alternation of *koinon* and *idion* throughout the oration)."

[34] Cogan (41) recognizes that the Funeral Speech was politically motivated, but only in so far as the "discontent with his policy, (...) primarily occasioned by the loss of home and property" made it useful for Pericles to show the Athenians that "the material losses they have received (and will continue to receive) and the hardships they endure are insignificant in comparison with the unique lives the city allows them to lead", and to construct "a vision of Athens that existed quite apart from any specific possessions, and to whose defense he could appeal in the face of any material losses." This seems to me both more 'idealistic' and less specific than the speech itself justifies. Cf. Kagan 66: "The Funeral Oration, at the very least, shows how Pericles could hope to succeed at the monumental task of holding the Athenian people to a painful strategy for the necessary time." (...) "He intended to explain to the living in the midst of a difficult war why their sufferings were justified and why their continued dedication was necessary."

[35] On an audience which was familiar with the traditional content of a funeral oration the effect of this omission of one of its most important parts must have been something like that of a Christmas preacher announcing to the congregation that he is not going to reiterate the overworked story of Bethlehem.

> what institutions and through what manner of life our empire became great. For I conceive that such thoughts are not unsuitable (οὐκ ἀπρεπῆ) to the occasion, and that it may be expedient (ξύμφορον) for this numerous assembly of citizens and strangers to listen to them. (II.36,4)

This indicates that Pericles was aware that the subject matter he intended to discuss could be felt to be inappropriate to the occasion, but that he considered it *expedient* to devote to it the main part of his speech. It is perhaps relevant to note that, when the fury and irritation in the city had reached its peak, Pericles had refused to summon an assembly, from fear that "coming together would result in wrong decisions, made under the influence of anger rather than of reason." (II.22,1)[36] As a funeral orator, however, he had the opportunity to say what he considered necessary without having to defend himself and without the risk of having his agenda dictated by those who were opposed both to his general policy and to the consequent war strategy.

Part of Pericles' discussion of the Athenian institutions and manner of life – which constitutes the centre part of his speech – seems designed to counter specific complaints on the part of his opponents about the instruments and effects of his policy. Those who found that Athens had become extremely vulnerable by cutting itself loose from its roots in the soil of Attica and by relying on its fleet both for its food supply and for its defence are silenced by the proud and paradoxical declaration that "the present generation has so richly endowed the city with all things that she is completely sufficient (αὐταρκεστάτην) for herself both in peace and in war" (II.36,3):

> because of the greatness and power of our city the fruits of the whole earth flow in upon us, so that we enjoy the goods of other countries as freely as those of our own. (II.38,2)

We should not underestimate the significance of this minimalization of the consequences of abandoning fundamental assumptions which for centuries had guided the Greek world, and which outside Athens still constituted the normal way of viewing the conditions of human existence. The agrarian population of Attica will have found this way

[36] For the interpretation of ἐκκλησίαν οὐκ ἐποίει see Hornblower *ad loc.* One suspects that Pericles' reluctance was inspired by the fact that many of the countrymen who, in normal times lived too far from the city to regularly attend the assembly, were now living within the city walls. Though the calculations which make Forrest (30) believe that the urban population was outnumbered three to one by countrymen seem rather questionable, the absence of the 'men of the fleet' must have increased the risk of the balance swinging against Pericles.

of extolling independence from the produce of their own land far from reassuring. They probably would have been more impressed by the way the pragmatic 'Old Oligarch' imagines that the 'demos' could justify Athens' dependence on products imported from overseas:

> the strongest land powers suffer badly from visitations of disease on the crops, whereas sea powers bear them easily. For the whole earth does not ail at the same time, so that from a prosperous land imports reach the rulers of the sea. (Ps.-Xen. II.6)[37]

On a somewhat deeper level Pericles seems resolutely intent upon a reappraisal of the 'people', telling them that they had earned for themselves the prestige traditionally reserved to the happy few, who were 'born to the manor' or to the farm. He treats them – to use Gomme's phrase (II, 126) – as "a whole people of aristocrats."[38] Immediately after having used this phrase Gomme hastens to say that, of course, Pericles idealized things: "the contrast with reality is seen most clearly not in what her enemies said of Athens, nor even in Thucydides' story of her words and deeds, but in Aristophanes' pictures of the *petit bourgeois*, Dicaeopolis, Strepsiades, Trygaeus and especially Philocleon." Of course the examples from Aristophanes do not prove much: they are, after all, typical representatives of the country-dwellers of Attica, and consequently not the ones I would suppose Pericles' words were primarily directed at – leaving aside the question of whether they can in any way be characterized as *petits bourgeois*.

The question that lurks behind all this is whether, *as a whole*, the Funeral Speech is what since the days of Dionysius many scholars have taken it to be: a description of Athenian power and civilization, conjured up by the Thucydidean Pericles because *Thucydides* thought the moment immediately before the outbreak of the great epidemic the right occasion for him to do so.[39] It will be clear by now that I

[37] For the way the chief grains used by the Greeks were affected by fluctuations of the amount and the timing of rainfall cf. Jameson 7 ff.

[38] Cf. Loraux (219), who seeks to explain the aristocratic character of the so-called eulogy of democracy by the persistence of the aristocratic perspective inherent in the genre: "A défaut de théorie démocratique, les *épitaphioi* présentent un éloge du régime, à défaut de théorie démocratique, un éloge aristocratique. (...) Sur des institutions neuves, des mots anciens."

[39] Even those who ascribe the content of the speech to Pericles often incline to maximize Thucydides' contribution. See, for instance, Jacqueline de Romilly, who believes Thucydides to have given the ideas of Pericles "an elevation of tone and an intensity of analysis which are very different from those which Pericles could in fact have reached when speaking before the people."

would prefer to regard it first and foremost as a *political* statement by a politician who was as experienced as he was sagacious and astute. The disappointing results of the first year of the war made him decide to exploit the grievances of those who were opposed to what he considered to be in the interest of Athens, for enhancing the confidence of his supporters and their readiness to fight to the best of their ability. In order to achieve this twofold goal he praises the dead, not by celebrating their exploits, but rather by celebrating the city they died for (II.42,1) as providing an ambience for collective as well as personal excellence of its citizens. This lends additional significance to the first sentence of the speech, where Pericles says that brave men should be honoured, not with words, but in deed: it is the city itself which testifies to their virtues.

Let us return to the 'Old Oligarch'. His picture of Athenian society is, at least in certain respects, extremely simple. First you had the upper classes and then you had the 'demos'. The upper classes were excellent, strong and steadfast, men of capacity, clever and skilful. They were once the defence of the state, who on horseback or, most of them, in the hoplite line of battle earned their right to rule. Now that the state depended on the mob that provided the crews for the ships even that chance of justifying their position was denied them. So they were bitterly hostile to democracy, to the government of the worthless rabble, sunk in foolishness, disorder, lack of education and low behaviour, and unable to show restraint, justice and fair play.[40]

It is characteristic of Pericles not just that he does not endorse this verdict on the Athenian 'demos', but that he seems determined to reverse it. A case in point is the carefully balanced[41] description of democracy (Thuc. II.37,2) as realizing the equality of all citizens before the law without at the same time equalizing them in fields where excellence can be shown. Athenian democracy as Pericles describes it does not keep in political obscurity any citizens who are capable to be of service to the state. What counts is not inherited privilege or membership of a particular class or section,[42] but the actual ability which a man possesses. Even a poor man can acquire prestige by contribut-

[40] For this summing up see Woodhead 64f.

[41] I do not see a reason to distinguish, as Oliver does, between an original intention of Pericles (wishing to defend the democracy of his day from the abuse of his contemporary opponents) and the colouring by Thucydides, who is supposed to have made Pericles praise the Athenian constitution as a 'mixed constitution'.

[42] This seems to me to be the right interpretation of *οὐκ ἀπὸ μέρους* in II.37,1.

ing to the well-being of his city. This is in marked contrast to what the 'Old Oligarch' tells us:

> For among the best people there is minimal wantonness and injustice but a maximum of scrupulous care for what is good, whereas among the people there is a maximum of ignorance, disorder and wickedness; for poverty draws them rather to disgraceful actions, and because of lack of money some men are uneducated and ignorant. (I.5)

In democracy as Pericles describes it the traditional advice of the high and mighty to those who are born to be ruled 'to mind their own business' (*τὰ ἑαυτοῦ πράττειν*) no longer applies. In Athens it is not objectionable that one should be a *πολυπράγμων*, a 'busybody':

> An Athenian citizen does not neglect the state because he takes care of his own affairs; and even those of us who are engaged in business have a very fair idea of politics. We alone regard a man who takes no interest in public affairs, not as a harmless but as a useless character. (Thuc. II.40,2)

This once again contrasts with the 'Old Oligarch'. His world view centers around the maxim that "one must forgive everyone for looking after his own interests": *αὑτὸν εὖ ποιεῖν παντὶ συγγνώμη ἐστίν.* (ps.-Xen. II.20) But he is convinced that the interest of the best people is in concordance with the interest of the community as a whole, while the lower classes do not think "that the good are naturally virtuous for the people's benefit, but for their hurt." (II.19) So the people in securing their own well-being will produce bad government:

> Someone might say that they ought not to let everyone speak on equal terms and serve on the council, but rather just the cleverest and the finest. Yet their policy is also excellent on this very point of allowing even the worst people to speak. For if the good men were to speak and make policy, it would be splendid for the likes of themselves but not so for the people. But, as things are, any wretch who wants to can stand up and obtain what is good for him and the likes of himself. Someone might say, 'What good would such a man propose for himself and the people?' But they know that this man's ignorance, baseness, and favour are more profitable than the good man's virtue, wisdom, and ill will. (I.6-9)

Pericles distances himself from this way of viewing the 'demos': he tells his audience that

> The great impediment to action is not discussion, but the want of that knowledge which is gained by discussion preparatory to action. For we have a peculiar power of thinking before we act and of acting too. (Thuc. II.40,2)

and thus assigns to them the old prerogative of the ἀγαθοί of being at the same time "doers of deeds and speakers of words" (*Iliad* IX.443). Unlike the heroes from former times, however, the city of Athens

> shall not need the praises of Homer or of any other panegyrist whose poetry may please for the moment, although his presentation of the facts will not bear the light of the day. We have compelled every land and every sea to open a path for our valour, and have everywhere planted eternal memories of our friendship and our enmity. (II.41,4)

It is Pericles himself who sings the praise the city deserves. He even calls his speech a 'hymn' (II.42,2: ἃ τὴν πόλιν ὕμνησα), and Thucydides has emphasized this by giving his prose an unmistakable rhythmical movement which in some respects resembles that of a Pindaric epinicion, as may be illustrated by the following instance (II.39,4):[43]

καίτοι εἰ ῥᾳθυμίᾳ μᾶλλον ἢ πόνων μελέτῃ	sxs'ssd
καὶ μὴ μετὰ νόμων τὸ πλέον ἢ τρόπων ἀνδρείας	xx∽s'∽ssd̄
ἐθέλομεν κινδυνεύειν περιγίγνεται ἡμῖν	∽s's'dd–
τοῖς τε μέλλουσιν ἀλγεινοῖς μὴ προκάμνειν	s's'd̄s–
καὶ ἐς αὐτ(ὰ) ἐλθοῦσι μὴ (ἀ)τολμοτέρους	sxs'd
τῶν αἰεὶ μοχθούντων φαίνεσθαι	s̄xs̄d̄
καὶ ἔν τε τούτοις τὴν πόλιν ἀξίαν εἶναι	xsxdd–
θαυμάζεσθαι καὶ ἔτ(ι) ἐν ἄλλοις	s̄xd–

Perhaps the most conspicuous sign that Pericles wanted to characterize the society he praises as a democratic society respecting aristocratic values and meeting aristocratic standards is the way he characterizes the relation of the Athenians with their allies:

> In doing good, again, we are unlike others; we make our friends by conferring, not by receiving favours. Now he who confers a favour is the firmer friend, because he would fain by kindness keep alive the memory of an obligation; but the recipient lacks enthusiasm, because he knows that in requiting another's generosity he will not be winning gratitude but only paying a debt. We alone do good to our neighbours not upon a calculation of profit, but in the confidence of freedom and in a frank and fearless spirit. (Thuc. II.40,4-5)

To say that the allies' attitude to their Athenian masters 'lacked enthusiasm' is something of an understatement. One remembers the diagnosis of the 'Old Oligarch', who tells us that the Athenians were aware "that the ruler is necessarily hated by the ruled", and who

[43] For the principles of Pindaric verse see my *Griechische Verslehre*, 160-178.

observes that "if the rich and aristocratic men in the cities of the allied were strong, the rule of the Athenian people would last for a very short time." (ps.Xen. I.14)

3. *Pericles' last speech*

In the second year of the war, apart from the almost unbearable sufferings of the plague, the Peloponnesians once again laid waste to the plain of Attica. This time they also entered the coastal area and penetrated as far as Laurium with its silver mines. The results of an Athenian expedition of some hundred ships against the Peloponnesus surpassed those of the first year, but still left much to be desired. They were, moreover, overshadowed by the failure of the expedition against Potidaea: Hagnon returned with his fleet to Athens empty-handed, having lost to the plague a thousand and fifty of his four thousand hoplites in forty days (Thuc. II.56-58). This caused a change in the spirit of the Athenians, who became eager to make peace with Sparta (Thuc. II.59,1). Pericles took them to task, imputing their lack of support for his policy to their weakness of character and un-aristocratic sentiments.

> The pain is present and comes home to each of you, but the good is as yet invisible to anyone, and, now that a great reverse has overtaken you unawares, the baseness of your mind prevents you from persevering in your resolution. (II.61,2)

He holds out to them the almost unlimited possibilities of sea power: "Neither the great King nor any nation on earth can hinder a navy like yours from penetrating whithersoever you choose to sail." (II.62,2)

One of the more remarkable passages is the one in which he sums up the relation between the Athenians and the allies in a way that is much more like the 'Old Oligarch' than what has been said in the Funeral Speech:

> Do not imagine that what you are fighting about is the simple issue of freedom or slavery: you have an empire to lose, and there is the danger to which the hatred of your imperial rule has exposed you. Nor is it any longer possible for you to resign your power, if, at this moment, any timorous or inactive spirit thinks that this would be a fine and noble thing to do. For by this time your empire has become a tyranny: it may have been wrong to take it; it is certainly dangerous to let it go. The men of whom I was speaking, if they could find followers, would soon ruin a city, and if they were to go and found a state of their own, they would equally ruin that. For inaction is secure only when arrayed by

> the side of activity; nor is it expedient or safe for a sovereign, but only for a subject state, to be a servant. (II.63,1-2)

This characterization of the relation between Athens and its allies is not easily compatible with that of the Funeral Speech. It seems, however, perverse to account for the divergence by making Thucydides responsible for the idealization in the Funeral Speech and ascribing the more realistic view to Pericles himself. I would rather suppose that in *both* cases we are hearing the voice of the real Pericles. In the Funeral Speech he was trying to boost the morale of the people by offering them an ideal worth fighting for, but now that he found himself in a nearly desperate situation he needed a much stronger medicine. Instead of the rosy coloured rhetoric of the Funeral Speech he decides to present a much more gloomy picture, and to make his audience positively afraid of the consequences in case they should follow those who advised them to make peace. He tells them that now they must learn to accept the burden that goes with having power over others:

> You are bound to maintain the imperial dignity of your city in which you all take pride; for you should not covet the glory unless you will endure the toil (II.63,1).

He makes it clear that there is no escape, and that both his opponents and his supporters are, so to speak, in the same boat. Those who wished to make peace without at the same time giving up the empire are reminded that this is no longer a viable option. But, just as in the Funeral Speech, those who would prefer to abandon the empire are treated with utter contempt: following their advice would cause the ruin of any city: "if they were to found a city of their own, they would equally ruin that." (II.63,2) Later on, Pericles explicitly admits the possibility of further setbacks:

> Even if we ever give way a little (for everything living must eventually wither), yet will the recollection live, that, of all Hellenes, we ruled over the greatest number of Hellenic subjects; that we withstood our enemies, whether single or united, in the most terrible wars, and that we were the inhabitants of a city endowed with every sort of wealth and greatness. (II.64,3)

He then returns to the hatred the Athenians have incurred by their way of asserting their superiority over others:

> The indolent may indeed find fault, but the man of action will seek to rival us, and he who is less fortunate will envy us. To be hateful and

> offensive has ever been at the time the fate of those who have aspired to empire, but he judges well who accepts unpopularity in a great cause. (II.64,3-4)

The only reward he has to offer is the consideration that

> Hatred does not last long, and, besides the immediate splendour of great actions, the renown of them endures for ever in men's memories. Looking forward to such future glory and present avoidance of dishonour, make an effort now and secure both. (II.64,5-6)

Apart from what is said about hatred these words have an almost Homeric ring, and provide a frame of reference for the concluding sentence of the speech, where the time-honoured heroic ideal of excellence, combining unwavering intelligence with resolute action, is demanded from a powerful city no less than from a powerful individual.

Hornblower (1991, 399) has drawn attention to the Homeric overtones of "the tranquil pessimism" displayed by Pericles when he resigns to the fact that "everything living must eventually wither." He rightly says that we should not too rapidly assume that therefore the passage was written by Thucydides as a kind of *vaticinium post eventum*, together with the obituary of Pericles. Elsewhere (1986, 65), however, he seems to be rather sceptic about attributing the passage to Pericles: "it may be Thucydides, not Pericles, who is here speaking, although a Homeric attitude on the part of the historical Pericles can hardly be ruled out."

This scepticism is shared by many others.[44] As in the case of the Funeral Oration, Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*De Thuc.* 45) leads the way:[45] "as a defendant Pericles should have been made to speak humbly and in such a way as to turn away the anger of his audience: this would have been the proper procedure for a historian who sought

---

[44] Proctor (248, n.1) gives the following rather impressive list: Andrewes, Brunt, Collingwood, J.H. Finley, M.I. Finley, Grosskinsky, Jaeger, Luschnat. E. Meyer, Patzer, Pohlenz, Schadewaldt, E. Schwartz, Ste. Croix, Strasburger, Syme, Wade-Gery.

[45] Cf. Kagan 65, note 73: "The error of treating the history of Thucydides like a drama, poem or oration and therefore subjecting it to the criticism deserved by the work of a poet or an orator is at least as old as Dionysius of Halicarnassus. (...) This error has continued to the present and will, no doubt, go on as long as Thucydides is studied by men accustomed to view his work as part of classical literature (...)." Cf. Dionysius *ad Pomp.* 21: *οὐκ ἂν αἰσχυνθείην ποιήσεις αὐτὰς λέγων.* Cornford's brilliant *Thucydides Mythistoricus* seems to have added to the respectability of seeing Thucydides as a historian and a writer of tragedy in one.

to imitate real life."[46] Gomme regards some sections of the speech as "perhaps the most artificial thing in all Thucydides' speeches, the farthest removed from actuality, and therefore, apparently, devised by Thucydides himself." Just as in the case of the Funeral Speech he points out that "the Athenians, just at this time, certainly had a passion for generalization in rhetoric such as we find it difficult to appreciate", but in this case even he inclines to admit the possibility that Thucydides composed the speech "freely, out of his own head."[47]

There seems, however, to be no valid reason to believe that, either in this last speech or in the Funeral Speech, Thucydides intended to give anything but the general purport of what the real Pericles actually said. Both speeches can and therefore must be understood from the military and political circumstances at the moment, and are to be seen as a politician's answers to a menacing situation. What motivated the speeches is not their alleged 'idealism' or even 'romanticism', but the firm and purposive determination of the speaker. Instead of compromising with his opponents, Pericles openly attacks those who refused to accept that caution, restraint, frugality and the desire to preserve the status quo are no longer the prime virtues. In his view, the Attic countryside has ceased to be the military and political centre of the Athenian state. Pericles exposes the fearfulness of those who became nervous of accumulating power and money instead of protecting the natural resources of their own soil, and at the same time minimizes the consequences of the extreme losses predicted by them in their effort to scare the supporters of his imperial policy: in the end, they will not affect the glory of Athens.

An essential part of what he brings forward in justification of his policy is the demonstration that major alterations could be made to the Athenian mode of subsistence without thereby clearing the way

---

[46] One feels grateful that neither Thucydides, nor, for that matter, Pericles himself did heed this kind of prescription.

[47] Gomme II, 167, 173, 181. It is difficult to swallow the argument of Proctor (143 and 149), who characterizes the last speech as "a strange, uneasy mixture, veering between almost petulant self-justification and high-flown bombast about the power and glory of Athens, alternating in style between the frigid didacticism of a sophist and flights of Olympian eloquence, containing, alongside passages as noble as any in Thucydides, others in the most tortured prose he ever wrote." From this highly subjective judgment he concludes that "Thucydides (*sic*) must have been under great strain when he wrote the speech, desperately trying to recapture the mood of that earlier, happier time." He finds in it "a last, resounding expression of Thucydides' own romantic conception of her [*i.e.* Athens'] power and glory."

for the kind of lawlessness, undisciplined behaviour and moral deterioration the 'Old Oligarch' cries out against, and that one can have a democratic constitution without at the same time destroying the basis for civilization. The change of tone, however, which distinguishes the last speech from the Funeral Oration makes one suspect that the characterization of Athenian democracy in the Funeral Speech is, perhaps, not entirely free from opportunism: it may have been at least partly inspired by the consideration that, in order to prevent his opponents from destroying the morale of his supporters, Pericles had to take a firm stand and simply could not allow himself to express doubts or restrictions.

In his last speech, Pericles is more realistic and even cynical than in the Funeral Oration,[48] but the political programme that is behind what he says is the same: in circumstances that are much more difficult than those of 430, the 'demos' has to live up to the standards traditionally regarded as the prerogative of the old establishment, and there is no room whatsoever for nostalgia or for restoration of the ancestral agrarian values: "even if not a single Athenian could work his farm, the Athenian state could survive indefinitely"[49] – provided that the 'people' show themselves capable of meeting the standards which apply to the citizens of the most powerful community in Greece.

The last speech is followed by Thucydides' obituary of Pericles, in which he praises him for having safeguarded Athens' security and having increased its power, and commends his correct estimate of Athenian power and his foresight. It is not my intention to discuss Thucydides' – perhaps too favourable – judgement:[50] after all, we will never know whether – as Thucydides believed – Pericles was right in his conviction that the Athenians were capable of winning an easy victory over the unaided forces of the Peloponnesians (II.65,1-3). In the short term he narrowly succeeded in dissuading his audience from coming to terms with the Spartans and in restoring at least some readiness (II.65,2: *ἐς τε τὸν πόλεμον μᾶλλον ὥρμηντο*) to prosecute the war.

In his analysis of its effects (II.65,1-2) Thucydides characterizes Pericles' last speech as an attempt to guide the thoughts of his audi-

---

[48] Cf. Gomme II, 177: "It is Perikles the realist in this speech, not the lofty idealist of the Epitaphios; and the contrast is intended." This seems to imply that it is Thucydides, not Pericles himself, who is to be held responsible for the difference.

[49] Crane 253. [50] Cf. Hornblower *ad* II.65,5.

ence away from their immediate sufferings. He distinguishes between their reaction so far as public policy was concerned and their personal feelings:

> As private individuals they still grieved about their misfortunes. The common people (δῆμος)[51] had had less to start with and had now been deprived even of that, the men of influence (δυνατοί) had lost their fine possessions in the country with their rich and well-equipped houses, and, worst of all, they were at war instead of living in peace. All together (ξύμπαντες), however, they stopped being angry only after having condemned Pericles to pay a fine.

Apparently, the main danger to Pericles' policy did not come from those who so far had supported his policy – though, contrary to his earlier line of conduct, he had to encourage expansionist sentiments in order to win them to his defence.[52] Once again the backbone of the opposition seems to have been constituted by those who lost possessions in the war. Thucydides' way of expression suggests that they joined forces and seized the opportunity to advocate peace. Pericles seems to have been saved only because they did not succeed in getting a majority for what they wanted, and therefore had to compromise with those who did not want to go as far as to bring Pericles down. The decision to fine him seems to have been taken unanimously.

4. *Back to the Funeral Speech*

On at least one point the effects of Periclean policy seem to have been irrevocable. As Edmund Burke[53] has pointed out, the Periclean policy of providing cash subsidies to the citizens "combined with the effects of the decision to devalue the *chôra* of Attica made at the outset of the Peloponnesian war, fundamentally altered key facets of the socio-political ethos of Athenian society." By tradition the land had been the basis of hoplite warfare, the comradeship of the hoplites reflecting a certain socio-economic cohesiveness. Making the fleet the city's prin-

---

[51] Of course, in Thucydides, the term has connotations which are very different from those attached to it by the 'Old Oligarch', who uses it of the town population only, as though the peasant-farmers did not belong. Gomme rightly compares the way Thucydides uses the term with what we find in Plato, who (*Rep.* 564 C) uses it of ὅσοι τε καὶ ἀπραγμόνες, οὐ πάνυ πολλὰ κεκτημένοι. *Pace* Gomme (II, 182) I would agree with Cornford in making αὐτουργοί refer to those who work their own land (cf., for instance, Thuc. I.141.5).

[52] See Kagan's in many ways illuminating discussion of the last speech, esp. p. 87.

[53] Burke 1992, 201, 219-221.

cipal weapon of foreign policy destroyed the military importance of the citizen hoplite forces, which was never to become again what it had been in the earlier fifth century. The starting point and the key to this reduction in status was Pericles' decision to vacate the countryside of Attica in the face of the annual Spartan invasion, thereby unalterably eroding the very basis of the status of the agrarian population. The result seems to have been more or less permanent; under the Thirty and after the war there were indeed efforts to restore and protect the Attic countryside, but it never regained its former importance for the support and the foreign policy of the community: "the principal ends to be served by the restoration of the *chôra* were ideological, and to insure these the state throughout the century was (...) willing to invest."[54]

So, when opposing to Pericles' strategy the agricultural population of Attica were inspired by a correct estimate of its implications: what to superficial observers may have looked like a decision on war tactics, inspired by what had been done in the Persian wars, reflected nothing less than a deliberate and decisive step towards a fundamental change of status for a whole segment of the population of the Athenian polis. In order to make Athens once and for all into the first and foremost power in Greece the 'subsistence perspective' of those producing mainly for their own households and the time-honoured ideology connected with it had to be replaced by a perspective which allowed the accumulation of wealth without at the same time endangering the social stability and moderation associated with the Solonian as well as with the Spartan model for society.[55]

The most reasonable explanation of certain surprising aspects of the Funeral Oration, then, seems to be that Pericles has taken the opportunity to counterbalance the discontent and vigorous pressure of those who correctly sensed that this was a moment of crucial importance: the misgivings raised by the outcome of the first war-year provided them with an opportunity to underline and substantiate their own indispensability to the city and to impress upon Pericles' followers the dangerous risks of accumulating power and wealth. Thus Pericles decided upon a piece of political propaganda in order to prevent his opponents from exploiting the doubts and fears of those he needed to carry out his policy, and thus increasing the inherent difficulties of his strategy.

---

[54] Burke 4. Cf. Finley, 62 ff.

[55] Cf. Crane 241.

Of course, this is not to say that Pericles did not mean what he said. It may very well have been his sincere conviction that his opponents were wrong in supposing that an open and dynamic society by definition suffers from lack of order and stability, or that democracy leaves no room for individual courage and excellence. We are, however, in danger of seriously misreading the Funeral Speech when we look upon it primarily as the lofty statement of the political creed of a convinced democrat: to all appearances, Pericles deliberately presented this picture at this moment in order to buck up the morale of the majority that was inclined to give up when the successes they had been promised failed to materialize, and to strengthen them against the disdain of others who traditionally considered themselves to be the backbone of the polis and who resented the denial of their value for society. By doing so he may have sown the seeds of the resentment which towards the end of the war was to inspire the violent reaction that resulted in the regime of the Thirty.

5. *Plutarch's silence about the Funeral Speech*

Some twenty years ago, Philip Stadter observed that Plutarch, in his Biography of Pericles, ignores the Funeral Speech, while in his other works he actually quotes from it.[56] This suggests to Stadter that, for Plutarch, the Funeral Oration represented "the thoughts not of Pericles but of Thucydides": "if Pericles did climb the *bema* in 430, as someone must have done every year throughout the war, he said nothing so memorable."[57] Now, arguments from silence are notoriously unreliable, especially if used to contradict a first-hand and reliable source – in this case Thucydides himself.[58] Elsewhere in his paper (117)

---

[56] 1973, 119 ff. Cf. Starr 347, n. 14: "In dealing with the Funeral Oration scholars henceforth will have to cope with Philip Stadter's demonstration that Plutarch, though he knew the speech, deliberately did not use it to illustrate Pericles' views." Cf. also Proctor 119, who argues along the same lines ("It is difficult to resist the conclusion (...) that Thucydides' rendering of Pericles' speech was not regarded by the later authors as containing any record of his actual words"), but apparently does not know Stadter's publication. [57] Stadter 121 and 20.

[58] It seems perverse to argue as Kahn does (and Stadter, 120, seems to accept) that Plato, in his *Menexenus*, "takes exception not to a Periclean speech of almost fifty years before, but to the contemporary interpretation of a view of empire and democracy which Plato found intolerable." The *Gorgias* makes it abundantly clear that Plato fundamentally objected to Themistocles and Pericles themselves, not to the interpretation of Periclean policy by Thucydides. Plato, of course, takes exception to the ideas of Pericles as he knew them (among others) from Thucydides, and as far as I can see

Stadter himself observes (1) that Plutarch did not regard the Periclean speeches in Thucydides as evidence for the special brand of eloquence Pericles was famous for, and (2) that from the speeches Plutarch does quote in his biography he "has omitted the analyses of power and strategy, which for the historian are their chief value, and concentrated on questions concerning character." Now, the Funeral Speech is among the most analytical of all speeches in Thucydides, and at first sight it contains no material that is especially relevant to the kind of interest Plutarch had in the moral character of those whose biographies he wrote. Plutarch's ignoring the speech, then, in itself is no evidence for Thucydides having made up the whole thing.

Apart from this, it seems to me that it is possible to explain Plutarch's silence about the Funeral Oration. It has been observed by others[59] that writing the biography of Pericles confronted Plutarch with a fundamental dilemma. On the one hand, many sources told him that Pericles was an ordinary democratic leader, "ready to yield and give in to the desires of the multitude as a steersman to the breezes." (XV.2) This fully confirmed Plato's verdict in the *Gorgias*, where Socrates endorses the oligarchic denunciation of Periclean policy: Pericles "made the Athenians idle and cowardly and talkative and covetous, because he was the first to establish pay for service among them." (516E) Just as other democratic politicians he "paid no heed to discipline and justice, but has filled the city with harbours and dockyards and walls and revenues and similar rubbish." (518E-519A) On the other hand, Thucydides described the administration of Pericles as being a democracy only in name: in fact it was a government by the greatest citizen. Plutarch could not believe that Thucydides and Plato would contradict each other on so fundamental an issue. As Gomme says, he decided that "Both must be right."[60] Hence his well-

---

nothing in the *Menexenus* indicates that he did not regard the Funeral Oration as essentially Periclean (Cf. Loraux 194 f.). Regarding the 'silence' of Aristotle, who at *Rhet.* 1365a31-2 (οἷον Περικλῆς τὸν ἐπιτάφιον λέγων) 1) uses the definite article and 2) gives a quotation that is not reflected in Thucydides' Funeral Speech see the decisive argument of Fornara (83, n. 12): "The idea that the phrase derives from an oration delivered some ten years earlier rests on the belief, apparently, that Thucydides would have repeated the phrase if it had been uttered in the famous Funeral Oration. Aristotle's reference to the phrase certainly suggests that he is thinking of the well-known one, and the inference is confirmed by *Rhetoric* 1411a2 ff.: τὴν νεότητα τὴν ἀπολομένην ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ), where Aristotle adds the qualifying words 'in the war'. That can only be the Archidamian war, not the conquest of Samos."

[59] See, for instance, Gomme I, 65. [60] *Loc. cit.*

known solution to the problem, which is that there must have been a change, a *μεταβολή*, in Pericles' way of conducting public affairs.

> Thucydides describes the administration of Pericles as rather aristocratic, – 'in name a democracy, but in fact a government by the greatest citizen'. But many others say that the people was first led on by him into allotments of public lands, festival-grants and distributions of fees for public services, thereby falling into bad habits, and becoming luxurious and wanton under the influence of his public measures, instead of being frugal and working the land with their own hands (*αὐτοῦργοι*). Let us therefore examine the reason for the change (*μεταβολή*) by means of the very facts. (IX.1)

For this reason, Plutarch divides his story of Pericles' career into two distinct periods, separated by the ostracism of Thucydides, son of Melesias in 443.

> When Aristides was dead, and Themistocles in banishment, and Cimon was kept by his campaigns for the most part abroad, Pericles decided to devote himself to the people, joining the poor and the many instead of the few and the rich, contrary to his own nature (*παρὰ τὴν αὐτοῦ φύσιν*), which was anything but popular (*δημοτική*). But he feared, as it would seem, to encounter a suspicion of aiming at tyranny, and when he saw that Cimon was very aristocratic in his sympathies, and was held in extraordinary affection by the 'Good and True' (*καλοὶ καὶ ἀγαθοί*), he began to court the favour of the multitude, thereby securing safety for himself, and power to wield against his rival. (VII.2)

So long as he had to cope with Cimon, Pericles relied on the sympathy of the 'demos' and kept himself aloof as much as possible. He carried out his policy by commissioning his friends and other politicians, such as Ephialtes (VI.5-6), who incurred the everlasting hatred of the opponents of democracy for breaking the power of the Areopagus,[61] and who was murdered secretly by his enemies for his inexorable way of prosecuting those who wronged the people (X.6).[62] After the death of Cimon in 449 the opposition against Pericles was led by Thucydides, son of Melesias.[63] He was "less of a warrior than Cimon, and more of a forensic speaker and politician" (XI.2) and succeeded remarkably well in unifying and strengthening the collective influence of those who opposed democracy. Hence, according to Plutarch,

---

[61] Cf. Plato, *Resp.* 562 C.

[62] Cf. Aristot. *Ath. Pol.* XXV,4.

[63] Cf. note 20 above.

> At this time, particularly, Pericles gave reins to the people, and made his policy one of pleasing them, ever devising some sort of a pageant in the town for the masses, or a feast or a procession, 'amusing them like children with not uncouth delights', and sending out sixty triremes annually, on which large numbers of the citizens sailed for eight months under pay, practising at the same time and acquiring the art of seamanship. (XI.4)

Plutarch, apparently, was aware that it is difficult to believe that, in acting in this way, all the time, Pericles acted contrary to his own nature, and makes the best of it by pointing out that Pericles intended thus to "rid the city of its mob of lazy and idle busybodies" (XI.5), and defends him against his enemies, who reproached him bitterly for squandering the city's resources on his building programme, which Plutarch himself praises as a spectacular and enduring testimony to the power and splendour of Athens.

It was only after the ostracism of Thucydides, son of Melesias, in 443, when he saw that "political differences were entirely remitted and the city had become a smooth surface, as it were, and altogether united" (XV.1) that Pericles became the man Plutarch knew from Thucydides' obituary: a statesman who, instead of being led by the multitude, himself

> led the people, for the most part willingly, by his persuasions and instructions. And, in times when they were sorely vexed with him, he tightened the reins and forced them into the way of their advantage with a master's hand, like a wise physician, who treats a complicated disease of long standing occasionally with harmless indulgences to please his patient, and occasionally, too, with caustics and bitter drugs which work salvation. (XV.2-3)

Most scholars share the view of Stadter that by *μεταβολή* Plutarch meant to refer, not to a change in character, but to a change of policy: "Plutarch is careful to point out that Pericles is not by nature a populist, but takes this course only in view of the political circumstances."[64] Later on in his biography, however, contrary to his normal assumption that a man's moral character springs from his *φύσις* and has to be further developed by education and habit, Plutarch seems almost prepared to admit that, in the case of Pericles, the transformation

[64] Stadter 1989, 94, 112. Cf. Breebaart 262: "So the transformation of 443 was only a return to his true self", and, further on: "It not so much the 'conversion' as the changing circumstances he asks his readers to look upon."

cannot be completely understood as a return to the 'real' Pericles, and seems to admit the possibility of a change of character:

> He was no longer the same man as before (*οὐκέθ' ὁ αὐτὸς ἦν*), nor alike submissive to the people and ready to yield and give in to the desires of the multitude as a steersman to the breezes. Nay, rather forsaking his former lax and sometimes rather soft management of the people, he struck the high and clear note of an aristocratic and kingly statesmanship. (XV.2)

It might therefore be best to side with Gomme (I,66), who regards the *μεταβολή* as "a radical change in Pericles' methods of conducting public affairs, amounting practically to a change in character." Apparently, the contradiction between Thucydides praising Pericles for his control of the people and Plato criticizing him for pandering to them made Plutarch modify his normal assumptions about human character. It is, moreover, remarkable that, when he sums up the diversity of judgement he found in his sources, he mentions Thucydides, but leaves out Plato's name (IX.1), and that, later on, he justifies Pericles' attitude towards wealth by the very un-Platonic statement that

> The life of a speculative philosopher is not the same thing as that of a statesman: the one exercises his intellect without the aid of instruments and independent of external matters for noble ends; whereas the other, inasmuch as he brings his superior excellence into close contact with the common needs of mankind, must sometimes find wealth not merely one of the necessities of life, but one of its noble things. (XVI.6)

These words seem to imply that Plutarch actually did ask himself the question of whether a politician is to be judged by the standards that are applied in Plato's *Gorgias*,[65] and that, in the case of Pericles, he was prepared to answer the question in the negative.[66]

This, then, is the frame of reference we need in order to answer the question, not only why it is that Plutarch does not even mention the Funeral Speech, but also why, when the story of Pericles' life has reached the moment of his last speech, by way of summing up he confines himself to a few feeble words:

> The Athenians being exasperated against him (...) he tried to appease and encourage them (XXXV.4),

---

[65] *Pace* Gomme I, 66.

[66] During the Italian Renaissance this line of defence still served the admirers of the *divinus Plato* against the fury of Greek patriots who, like George of Trapezus, could not forgive Plato for smirching the great heroes of Greek history.

instead of making the most of a document which, if any, testifies, as Thucydides has it (II.65,8), to Pericles' ability to control the people, to oppose and even to anger them, and to "reanimate their confidence when they were depressed by groundless fears." The correct answer to this question may be that, as Gomme (I,69) has observed, the detractors of Pericles did not, like Thucycides, approve of the last fifteen years of his career. They may have respected or rather feared him for his capacity to lead the people in what he considered to be the right direction, but they decidedly did not subscribe to the judgement of Thucydides, who was no party man and who judged politicians by pragmatic standards:

> under his guidance Athens was safe, and reached the height of her greatness in his time. When the war began he showed that here too he had formed a true estimate of the Athenian power (...) and, after his death, his foresight was even better appreciated than during his life. (II.65,5-6)

Thucydides finds the explanation for the success of Pericles as a politician in the famous diagnosis that, under Pericles, the city "though in name a democracy, was in fact ruled by her first citizen." (II.65,9) It is Plutarch – for whom the expression used by Thucydides must have had Platonic overtones – who takes this to mean that Pericles earned himself the epithet "aristocratic", a term Thucydides does not use, and presumably, in this context, would have regarded as entirely out of place.

The opponents of democracy and of Pericles' view of the future of his city – his contemporaries as well as those who lived after him – differed from Thucydides in that they most definitely disapproved both of the man and of the results of his policy. They differed also from Plutarch in that, in their view, Pericles at no moment whatever of his career did deserve the epithet 'aristocratic' in any sense of the word. In Plutarch's time, however, the age of Pericles was regarded unanimously as the legendary high point of Greek history. He is therefore inclined to subscribe to the positive judgement of Thucydides, which, however, was incompatible with Plato's condemnation. Hence he did what he could to bring the two together, and, among other things, introduced the term 'aristocratic' in his summing up of Thucydides' judgement. But even so it was next to impossible to corroborate this evaluation with the story his sources, Thucydides included, told him. Plutarch, however, was an honest man, and it testifies to his conception of the task of a biographer that, in his story of Pericles' life,

he records faithfully even those facts which might detract from the reputation of his hero, such as the allegation that Pericles stirred up the war with Sparta to avoid a dangerous impeachment, "hoping thereby to dissipate the charges made against him", adding that "such, then, are the reasons which are alleged for his not suffering the people to yield to the Lacedaemonians; but the truth about it is not clear." (*τὸ δ' ἀληθὲς ἄδηλον*: XXXII.3)

As Gomme (I,69) rightly remarks, "Though Plutarch does not think of Perikles as a man without blemish, no conception of him as a great statesman, distinguished especially by *μεγαλοφροσύνη* and by political courage, or even as an *ἀνὴρ σπουδαῖος*, is compatible with such a doubt as this." It seems not unreasonable to assume that Plutarch actually disapproved of the changes Pericles brought about in the social and political structure of Athens. He will have sympathized with many of the complaints of the agrarian population about his handing over the city – as they saw it – to the caprices of a majority who trampled on the ancestral traditions. I take it, then, that to Plutarch, neither the Funeral Speech nor the last speech by Pericles, could help to substantiate the judgement of Thucydides as he read it. The omission of the Funeral Speech and the cavalier treatment of the last speech do not indicate that he regarded them as made up by Thucydides, but make one suspect that he found it difficult, if not impossible, to cope with the material they contained. Plutarch's silence then, does not cast doubt on Thucydides' reliability as a historian, but, on the contrary, confirms the faithfulness of the historian in recording the general purport of what Pericles actually said. Plutarch, however, was no politician, whereas Thucydides has been rightly praised by Thomas Hobbes as being "the most politick historian who ever writ." The more remarkable it is that Thucydides' final judgement on Pericles' merits as a politician makes it clear that he was insensitive to the diagnosis made by Herodotus as well as by Thomas Hobbes, that, for those who have achieved power there is no way back: in order to assure the power one has and the means to live well that goes with it, it can be necessary to acquire more.[67]

[67] One would like to visit Pericles' home at a moment when Herodotus, Protagoras and Sophocles were his guests, and to imagine Herodotus' view of history having been partly inspired by his personal observation of Pericles as a politician.

6. *Conclusion*

The very fact that the content of both the Funeral Oration and the last speech provide us with material that enables us to question the correctness of Thucydides' final judgement on Pericles seems to rule out the possibility that the speeches were Thucydides' own invention. They no doubt faithfully reflect Pericles' own analysis of two different situations as well as the way he exploited the conflicts of interest between various groups of citizens in the city he was to guide. Whether this diagnosis enhances or diminishes our admiration for Pericles as a politician is a question not to be dealt with here – although one should not be blind to the possibility that the wide spread reluctance to read the Funeral Speech as the political document it is, may originate with the wish to admire it as the exemplary charter of a civilized democracy and to subscribe to Thucydides' – and Plutarch's – judgement that, under Pericles' wise guidance, Athens managed to avoid the dangers of a so-called 'radical' democracy, where the elite is threatened by the 'rule of the mob'. At closer examination the difference between Pericles and his successor Cleon may have been smaller than Thucydides made it appear: Pericles' last speech, in certain respects, can be said to point into the direction Cleon was to take – notably where it encourages the kind of expansionist tendencies that, later on, would inspire the fatal expedition to Sicily. We should, then, not underestimate the possibility that Pericles, by adding fuel to the conflicts of interest and opinion among the Athenian citizens may have deepened the resentment that, once Athens had lost the war, was to cause the violent and even murderous reaction of those he had hurt and made into the lasting enemies of the democratic regime by totally neglecting their interests and importance for their city so as to ensure himself of the support and to keep up the morale of those he needed to carry out his policy.

ARISTOTLE AND HERODOTUS

τὰ γενόμενα OR οἷα ἂν γένοιτο?

1. In chapter 9 of his *Poetics* (1451a36ff.), Aristotle discusses the difference between ἱστορία and ποίησις. It is the task of the 'poet'[1] to write about οἷα ἂν γένοιτο καὶ τὰ δύνατα κατὰ τὸ εἰκὸς ἢ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον, while the subject of the historian is τὰ γενόμενα. The historian records "what Alcibiades did or what happened to him," the poet deals with "the kinds of thing a certain type of person under certain circumstances[2] will probably or necessarily say or do." This clear-cut distinction confronts the reader with two problems:

(1) How can we explain that Aristotle's concept of historiography reduces historians such as Herodotus (who is mentioned by him in this context) and Thucydides (whom he never mentions by name) to chroniclers, to mere recorders of 'facts'?

(2) Aristotle's description of the poet's subject matter may apply to the comedy of a poet such as Menander, but not to tragedy: its *dramatis personae* mostly are historical figures, and the tragic poet is not free, or only to a restricted extent, to deviate from τὰ γενόμενα as laid down in tradition.

Of these two questions, the second is also raised by Aristotle himself. His answer to it is that most tragedians have chosen historical figures as their subject for the sake of credibility: the audience will be prepared to believe in the possibility of what actually happened. In Aristotle's own words: "the reason being that what is possible (δύνατον) is believable (πιθανόν). We do not believe that what has not happened is possible, whereas what has happened obviously is. For if it were not, it would not have happened." (1451b16-19)

This answer raises two further questions:

(3) Aristotle himself points out that there are exceptions to the

---

[1] The word is put between inverted commas because the Aristotelian concept of ποίησις does include the work of Homer, Sophocles and Plato, but not that of Pindar and Sappho, which makes his use of the terms ποίησις and ποιητής untranslatable.

[2] The usual translations of οἷα ἂν γένοιτο (such as: 'the sort of thing that might be expected to happen', 'a kind of thing that might be') neglect the semantic contribution of ἄν, which is "to denote that the action of the verb is dependent on some circumstances or conditions, expressed or implied." (quoted from W.G. Goodwin, *Greek Grammar*. 1894, 277).

'rule': many tragedies contain fictitious as well as historical ingredients, and some tragedians even used completely fictitious *personae* as well as plots. This is, he says, understandable: after all, the advantage of the higher degree of credibility of historical facts only works for those members of the audience who are familiar with the events in question; those who do not know them still enjoy the plays based on them. In other words: poets do not treat *τὰ γενόμενα* as such, but only insofar they also meet the requirements of probability: some historic occurrences may well be in the probable order of things (1451b30-31: *τῶν γὰρ γενομένων ἔνια οὐδὲν κωλύει τοιαῦτα εἶναι οἷα ἂν εἰκὸς γενέσθαι*).

This gives us a corrected version of the specific difference between historian and poet: the historian has to record what happened, no matter whether the events can or cannot be made understandable as part of a causal chain, whereas the poet has to limit himself to what is probable or necessary, albeit that part of his audience will be sooner inclined to believe his story if he takes his subject matter from history.

(4) If Aristotle had directly presented the distinction between poet and historian in this corrected form, the resemblance between the historian and the poet whose plot is based on historical events, would not have been problematic: *τὰ γενόμενα* may indeed belong to the category of *οἷα ἂν γένοιτο*. That *τὰ γενόμενα* are by definition *δύνατα* and therefore *πιθανά*, is at most an explanation of the fact that tragedians *prefer* to take historical events as their subject. But even then a problem remains: the idea that the poet's story could fail to be *πιθανόν* seems to be in flat contradiction with the very requirement that the sequence of events that constitues the plot must be in accordance with the laws of probability or necessity. In a piece of *ποίησις* that deserves its name, each part of the action will be intrinsically connected with what precedes and with what follows, and will thus be believable by definition. So, if the poet does his work well, the problem that his audience would fail to find his plot believable can only occur with those members of the audience whose vulgarity or lack of imagination will make them disbelieve whatever does not belong to 'reality' as they have come to know it. At 1460a26, Aristotle himself emphasizes that the impossible, if it is *εἰκός*, is to be preferred over what is possible as such, yet lacks *εἰκός*.

Of course, a certain event may be contrary to what the audience hopes or expects; in that case, an adequate presentation of the events will make them see that their hope or expectation was based on lack of insight. In fact, the emotional impact of a tragedy may even be

increased by the audience having the experience that something which one would not expect to happen initially, turns out to be the logical and inevitable result of what preceded: at 1452a4 ff., Aristotle himself says that the tragic action will evoke most ἔλεος and φόβος if the events occur *παρὰ τὴν δόξαν δι' ἄλληλα*, if, that is to say, what seems to be completely accidental turns out to be part of a causal chain, making us feel there must be a controlling purpose behind it, as in the example of Mitys, whose statue fell down upon his murderer and killed him.

The only conclusion that can be drawn from this curious state of affairs is that Aristotle made things more difficult for himself than necessary. It would have done no harm to his analysis of ποίησις if he had drawn the line between poet and historian less sharply: the poet is free to present historical truth or fiction on the condition that his story obeys the laws of probability or necessity, whereas the historian, when he wants to show that we can understand the course of history, would have to show that it meets the demands of probability or even necessity. Aristotle, however, actually implies that the γενόμενα of the past are a mere succession of occurrences in which logic or probability can be discovered only incidentally (1451b30-1). The remarkable consequence of this view is that historiography seems to be left without any function or significance of its own: if only some (ἔνια) actual occurrences are the sort of thing that would probably or inevitably happen, studying the facts of the past as such is of little use to those who want to understand the course of history. Aristotle seems, then, not to have shared Thucydides' belief that politicians can profit from a historian's analysis of the past experience of their predecessors.

Within the framework of the *Poetics* such a view on the historian and his subject has far-reaching consequences. If εἰκός and ἀναγκαῖον do not have a place in the realm of history, these concepts lose much of their significance outside the sphere of literature. What will be the exemplary significance of a plot where everything happens according to a kind of 'logic' if this logic does not hold in reality? On what grounds shall we feel that a plot is plausible if our experience of the real world tells us that what actually happens is mostly unpredictable? Why would one call literature φιλοσοφώτερον or more καθόλου than historiography, if the insights the poet visualizes do not enhance our understanding of life itself?

The consequences of reducing the historian to a simple chronicler are, then, so fundamental to the Aristotelian concept of literature that it seems worthwhile to see if we can both save Aristotle's analysis of

ποίησις and show that it can support an adequate evaluation of at least one representative of ancient historiography.

2. It seems not unreasonable to describe the work of Herodotus as the story of the confrontation between the Greeks and Persians, told in such a way that

- it makes the reader understand why the course of events was the way it was, and
- the insight obtained and communicated to the reader by means of the story gains a significance that goes beyond the events described.

The programmatic first sentence of Herodotus' work can be paraphrased as follows:[3] 'This is Herodotus' presentation of the results of his inquiries. It is his intention to preserve the knowledge of man's history for future generations and to keep the admirable feats of the Greeks and barbarians from inglorious oblivion. My inquiries specifically pertain to the *αἰτίη* of the armed conflict between the Greeks and the barbarians.' This paraphrase seeks to express two things in particular:

(a) Apart from ensuring *κλέος* for those who deserve it – a goal Herodotus has in common with epic poets – the recording of history has an importance of its own: our memory of what has occurred as a result of human actions (*τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων*) has to extend beyond the generation of those who have observed these *γενόμενα* in person.

(b) Herodotus' interest is more specifically directed towards the *αἰτίη* of the events he describes. The question of what exactly is the meaning Herodotus attaches to the term *αἰτίη* has been examined by Bornitz (1968). His conclusion is that Herodotus is not, as is often said, looking for a 'cause' of the conflict – which could lie in a certain geographical or economic constellation for instance – but that he wants to identify the *human being* who can be regarded as its starting point. One should realize that the term *αἰτίη* normally refers to the starting point of something one would have wished to be otherwise, of a development that, in retrospect, one has to evaluate as negative. This is not to say that the term as such implies that the one 'who started it' is also 'guilty', in the sense of bearing a (moral) responsibility for not having acted otherwise.

---

[3] For the problems related to the interpretation of this sentence, see Erbse 1956, 209 ff.

This interpretation of *αἰτίη* is confirmed by the first five chapters of Herodotus I, which, as the ending of chapter I.5 makes clear, are best regarded (together with the introductory sentence) as the proem to his work. In these chapters, the issue is indeed to find out who are the *αἴτιοι τῆς διαφορῆς*. Herodotus explains that he is not interested in the 'mythical' past, about which we can no longer be certain. His intention is to identify the man of whom one can *know* that he started with *ἄδικα ἔργα* towards the Greeks, and thereby drew them into the sequence of events that led to what we know as the Persian wars. Once this man has been identified, Herodotus can proceed with his *λόγος* (*τοῦτον σημήνας προβήσομαι ἐς τὸ πρόσω τοῦ λόγου*). So it does indeed make sense to say that Herodotus' main theme is the conflict between Greeks and barbarians, and that the design of his *λόγος* is determined by his conviction that the *αἰτίη* is to be found in Croesus, who upset the balance of *δίκη* between Asia and the Greeks.

2.1. The question whether the overall design of the *Historiae* is in accordance with this beginning, is complicated by the fact that many scholars regard the text as we have it as the result of a complicated genesis.[4] As is often the case with this type of discussion, the truth seems to lie between two extremes. One should not judge Herodotus by our standards of composition and look for a 'genetic' explanation for everything that does not meet them. It is equally incorrect to regard the work, at all costs, as the expression of a consistent author's intention, which remained unchanged from beginning to end, with all parts owing their presence, content and form to their function in an integrated whole, which Herodotus would have had in mind from the very start of his activity.[5] It looks as if the characteristic features of the work may best be explained if one regards a 'unitarian' and an 'analytical-genetic' interpretation as complementary. It cannot be denied that all elements of the work have more or less successfully been subordinated to its main theme, but that does not imply that each and every *λόγος* or *excursus* was designed by Herodotus as an equally vital contribution to an ultimate master plan. There are many indications that the conception that enabled him to incorporate the results of earlier inquiries into the larger whole only occurred to him when a number of *λόγοι* had already been committed to writing.

---

[4] The most elaborate and by far the best-informed genetic explanation is still that of F. Jacoby.

[5] For an example of this type of interpretation see Pohlenz 1937.

The implications of this hypothesis, which in itself is plausible, have been elaborated by Von Fritz (1967, I 442-475) and Fornara (1971). They assume that Herodotus' main reason for undertaking his travels was his wish to correct, "an Ort und Stelle", Hecataeus' views on the geography of the continents. During his travels, he collected, besides geographical data, large amounts of ethnographical and historical material that formed the content of separate λόγοι such as the one about Egypt in book II. The idea of making the origin, course and meaning of the conflict between the Greeks and the Asiatic barbarians the topic of a single monumental work must have occurred to him later,[6] when he had become aware of the exceptional significance of this conflict, and had formed an opinion about its precise nature. This enabled him to decide on the overall design of his *Historiae*. He then incorporated the material he had collected for other purposes, more or less in its original form, into this new structure.

It may be that Herodotus, had he lived longer, would have further increased the homogeneity of his work in the light of its final purpose, but there are no indications that he wanted to achieve something like an 'organic' composition in the sense of showing a hierarchical order in which the presence and position of each part are determined by its contribution to the whole. Nor was it, apparently, his ambition to achieve a neat balance between the size of the parts and the importance they have to the context. It seems to have been his intention to incorporate as much material as he could into the main framework of his book rather than to ensure that each and every detail he wanted to communicate was immediately relevant to its general purport. Many parts of his book are comparatively independent in the sense of having an interest of their own, which makes it preferable to speak of the *disposition* or *arrangement* of the material rather than of a consistent and purposeful 'organic' *composition*. This does not mean that the result must be incoherent. The audience is never left in the dark about the relevance and function of what is offered, and, more importantly, there is a network of repetitions and other indications that help them to keep track of Herodotus' main concern.

2.2. The guiding principles that determined Herodotus' 'philosophy of history' are almost completely represented in the Croesus story, with which the work opens, and to which a thematic significance may therefore be assigned.

---

[6] Possibly in Athens. See Latte 1958.

The heart of the matter seems to be that Herodotus wanted to convey and justify the belief that, behind the instability of human life, a distinct pattern may be observed, that enables one to establish a certain, albeit hard-to-discover, relationship between the vicissitudes of life on the one hand and *δίκη* in the sense of a permanent tendency towards restoring a disrupted balance on the other. His analysis of history told him that Solon was right in assuming that, if one acquires a disproportionate quantity of wealth or power, there are mechanisms which see to it that, 'ultimately' (*εἰς τέλος*, to use Solon's words) – if need be in the next generation – one will meet disaster. He justifies this by the observation that those who gain power and wealth at the expense of others can only retain what they have got by increasing it ever further. Expansionism at the cost of others makes one extremely vulnerable, because an excess of power makes one inclined to overestimate oneself and entices one to make errors of judgement – or, to put it in religious terms, exposes one to the *φθόνος* of the gods. Nobody, however, can avoid *τὸ χρέον γενέσθαι*, whether he sees through it or not.

This complex of ideas, which, in some respects, resembles the message that apparently was propagated by the Delphic oracle, is closely related to a couple of meaningful contrasts, notably the contrast between (immoderate) wealth and comparative poverty (affluency predisposes to lust for power and to misfortune, moderate means do not) and that between servile behaviour – the complement of tyranny – and the spirit of freedom which has a restraining effect on the inclination to subjugate others.

The degree to which this complex of ideas permeates Herodotus' work shows considerable variation: besides many parts from which it is practically absent, we find others that simply cannot be imagined without it. Not surprisingly, next to the chapters (I.6-49) that are devoted to Croesus – who was the first to disrupt the balance between 'West' and 'East' – the prime example of the latter category is Herodotus' report of Xerxes' final expedition (books VII-IX), which is, so to speak, the climax of the development that was started by Croesus. Chapters 5-19 of book VII provide the prelude and frame of reference for this story: the conversations and speeches of Xerxes, Mardonius and Artabanus have an especially important thematic function in that they implicitly provide the framework that will enable the reader to appreciate the significance of what is said and done afterwards.

It can hardly be a coincidence that it is precisely in these two stretches of narrative that Herodotus' control over his material is greatest: they show a closely-knit 'organic' structure, in which longer digressions are lacking, and they are so designed as to make the reader constantly aware of the deeper significance of the dramatic events he is made a witness of.

These characteristics are lacking in the passages that may be assumed to stem from an earlier phase of Herodotus' activity, as is most clearly illustrated by the λόγος about Egypt in book II. In these passages, Herodotus has arranged his material according to a fixed 'format' that enables him to inform his audience in an orderly way about a great variety of subjects that have no relevance other than that they satisfy the curiosity of the public. Interpretative conversations are almost absent, as are stories that give a perspective and significance to what we are being told. In this type of context, Herodotus is constantly present as a person – "clever, paradoxical and combative" (Fornara 19) – in a way that is very different from what we find in his narrative about Croesus and about Xerxes' final expedition: there the story tells itself as it were, and Herodotus refrains from discussing the credibility of his sources or substantiating his preference for one version of what happened rather than an other: "He is completely the master of his material, choosing among conflicting versions and relegating some into silence." (Fornara *ib.*)

A somewhat paradoxical but fully adequate description of the difference between most of books II-VI on the one hand, and books I and VII-IX on the other, is that Herodotus becomes more of a literary artist – or, as Fornara (36) has it, "an imaginative expounder of his material" – as he becomes more of a historian. His instruments for shaping his audience's perspective on the story he is relating are those of the 'omniscient' author of a play or an epic poem, who remains in the background and allows the story to speak for itself.

To put it differently: it is not just a matter of Herodotus having changed his role of a critical 'reporter' of interesting information and 'antiquities' for that of an interpreting and explaining historian. The characteristics of the explanation he has in mind result in what must have been a deliberate change in his means of presentation: apparently, Herodotus considered the dramatized narrative to be the most adequate medium to transmit to his audience the explanation he wanted to advocate as a historian: *the story itself is meant to be the explanation.* The thoughts and actions of the personages express and embody as it

were the laws and probabilities that control human existence: in this way, *τὰ γενόμενα ἐξ ἀνθρώπων* are indeed shown to be *οἷα ἂν γένοιτο*.

Once he had decided that telling a dramatized story was the most effective way of making his audience aware of the patterns of history, Herodotus felt himself free to leave the sphere of the verifiable *γενόμενα* in order to give voice to the beliefs and reasoning of his *dramatis personae*, as, for instance, in his report of the conversation of Xerxes and Artabanus in the Persian crown council, which surely is not based on any eye-witness report Herodotus could have had at his disposal.

In this respect Herodotus differs from Thucydides, who felt obliged to respect the general purport (*ξύμπασα γνώμη*) of what was actually said by his *dramatis personae*, while Herodotus as a narrator even pretends to know what Atossa *ἐν τῇ κοίτῃ* discussed with Darius (III.134), and thus moves into territory we would sooner reserve for a historical novelist. An even more obvious example of this is the – chronologically almost certainly impossible – conversation between Solon and Croesus (I.30 ff.), which is one of the central thematic parts of Herodotus' work.[7] So, where *εὕρεσις*, *σύστασις* and *λέξις*[8] are concerned, Herodotus utilizes the instruments that suit the 'Rhetoric of Fiction'. Nevertheless, his work is far from being an epic, a tragedy or a historical novel, for at least two reasons.

First, the historian's freedom of *εὕρεσις* is, of course, more restricted than that of the poet, who according to Aristotle (1460a27) may even represent what could never have happened on condition that it is intrinsically probable. This restriction forbids us to call Herodotus' work 'literature' in the sense in which, for instance, Immerwahr (1967)[9] and Fehling do. It cannot be denied that he uses literary devices and motifs, but he does so for the sake of communicating his interpretation of *τὰ γενόμενα*.

A second crucial difference between Herodotus' *ἱστορία* and *ποίησις* is that Herodotus' primary intention is not to affect his audience emotionally – although no one will deny that there are many places in his work where he succeeds in doing precisely this – but to communicate an *insight*: the narrative is presented in such a way that the

[7] It is, as always, risky to generalize: to all appearances, the discussion about the most desirable constitution for Persia at III.80 ff. is a piece of fiction, but Herodotus explicitly assures his audience that the *λόγοι* presented by him have actually been spoken (III.80,1).

[8] For the stylistic variety of Herodotus' work see Denniston 1952, 5 ff.

[9] Cf. Den Boer 1970, 503-4.

we need no further authorial comment, but can see for ourselves how and why the *γενόμενα* that constitute the story fit into a distinct pattern, and are therefore intrinsically probable, or even: could not have been otherwise. It is not *ἔλεος* and *φόβος*, but understanding of the factors that have determined the past and will determine the future, that Herodotus wanted to offer his audience.

Herodotus nowhere explicitly says that he wanted his original audience to apply what he taught them to their own situation as it was at the very moment he 'published' his results. There is, however, much to be said for Fornara's hypothesis that it was part of his intention to put the threat of the Peloponnesian war into a historical perspective. The audience is as it were invited to see the analogy between the expansionism of the Athenians, which damaged the autonomy of the 'allies', and certain situations that, in the past, inevitably had led to wars and catastrophic failures.

It is in accordance with his method of presentation that Herodotus communicates this insight by the way he concludes his story rather than by making it explicit. In the context of the pattern he has shown to underlie the instability of human *εὐδαιμονίη*, the last event in his work gains a symbolic significance: the taking of Sestos is the first deed of expansion of Athens towards Persia, and it is to be expected that Athens will turn out to be subjected to the 'laws of history' as Herodotus saw them: the victor in the conflict with the Persians will in turn seek to expand at the expense of others, and in the end will be destroyed by the conflicts thus evoked. There are, of course, several indications that our text of the *Histories* does not represent what its author intended to be the final product. But I doubt whether Herodotus, had he lived longer, would have continued his narrative. "Athens is left at the height of her greatness prosecuting the war in 479" (Fornara 81). The very open-endedness of this conclusion of his work is an effective way to suggest that what is about to happen, once again, will be *οἷα ἂν γένοιτο*, if not *τὸ χρέον γενέσθαι*.

One would, however, misunderstand Herodotus if one were to assume that he had the illusion that the insight he conveyed to his audience would – or even: could – make Athens change the course it was about to take. To his contemporaries, he himself plays the role of the 'warner' who so often appears in his work to underline the inevitability of the events[10] – the role of the unprejudiced and understanding

[10] Cf. Bischoff 1932, 5-11, 17-20, 26-30.

spectator, much more than that of one who himself wants to participate in, let alone influence, future events.

That Herodotus differed from Thucydides, who wanted to present a *κτῆμα ἐς αἰεί*, in that he first of all addresses his own contemporaries may be or not be correct, but the fact that Herodotus does not pretend that his work is useful to future politicians does not make it into an *ἀγώνισμα ἐς τὸ παραχρῆμα ἀκούειν* – an ungenerous characterization which marks the distance between Herodotus' and Thucydides' view of history.

An interpretation of Herodotus along these lines gives him more credit than Aristotle (or, for that matter, Thucydides) did. If, as argued above, Aristotle's analysis of *ποίησις*, partly due to its author's view on history and, consequently, on historiography, shows a more or less fatal inconsistency, this inconsistency can be removed without damage being done to the core of Aristotle's explanation of the phenomenon of literature.[11]

---

[11] The above implicitly takes a stand against Von Fritz 1958, 116. Cf. also Radt 1971, who looks for the explanation for what seems inconsistent in the *Poetics* by pointing out that Aristotle's theory focuses on the *ideal* tragedy – on the *τέλος* of the historical development of the genre – rather than on the tragedies that actually exist.

LUCIAN, CICERO AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

"With due respect for Herodotus, who was a generation older than Thucydides and who rightly received the honorary title of *pater historiae* from Cicero, Thucydides should be regarded as the *auctor intellectualis* proper of the historiographical sciences and of historiographical practice."

This sentence from J.C.F. Nuchelmans' valedictory lecture (1985, 6), may not express a *communis opinio*,[1] but certainly does reflect a widespread opinion. Thucydides' critical attitude towards his sources, his sophisticated analysis of the concept of causation, his rational approach and his 'cool detachment'[2] are reasons that are often given for regarding him, rather than Herodotus, as the pre-eminent representative of ancient historiography as a scientific discipline in the modern sense of the word. It may be worth confronting the image of the historiographer which implicitly underlies this appreciation with that of antiquity itself.

In the Greek-Roman world, historiography was not acknowledged as a scientific discipline in its own right. Aristotle is a case in point. He was intensively involved in collecting historical documentation and in improving the chronological frame of reference a historian needs, but he nevertheless (*Poet.* 1451b7ff.) regarded historiography as an essentially unphilosophical activity which has nothing to do with science. To him a historian's job is to record τὰ γενόμενα, but these will not enable him to infer (by way of inductive reasoning) historical patterns or general tendencies. In the teleological frame of reference that is distinctive for Aristotle's worldview, it is the philosopher's task to account for the way things are by relating them to the τέλος of the system they are part of. His 'history' of tragedy as a genre in the *Poetics* illustrates this. If we knew nothing more about the Greek historians of the classical period than what Aristotle tells us, we would almost

[1] See for instance Verdin 1971, who argues that Herodotus *avant la lettre* rather satisfactorily meets the methodical requirements of a modern historian, and Fehling, who in the same year defended the thesis that all 'Quellenangaben' of Herodotus should be regarded as literary fiction. For a well-balanced opinion see Momigliano 1965, 127ff.

[2] These words have also been taken from Nuchelmans, who also puts them between inverted commas.

have to conclude from what he says, that Greek historiography had not yet outgrown the primitive stage of the registration of public facts. However, since we know that Herodotus and Thucydides left the bare *annalium confectio à la* Fabius Pictor far behind them, we are in a position to see that Aristotle's judgement is biased, and why.

The only surviving, more or less elaborate Greek text about the theory and practice of historiography written by a non-historian, is Lucian's *On how to write history* (Πῶς δεῖ ἱστορίαν συγγράφειν). The implications of Lucian's argument, when evaluated by modern standards of historiography, are remarkable. How can it be that in a civilization that has brought forth great historians such as Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius and Posidonius, it was necessary to separate explicitly the domain of the historian from that of panegyric orators and poets? How should we explain the fact that, apparently, even those who obviously failed to take into account the demarcations that we take for granted, nonetheless explicitly defined themselves as standing in the tradition of Herodotus and Thucydides?

The question becomes more pressing when we observe that both Plutarch (*De glor. Ath.* 347a ff.) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*De Thuc.* 347, 15 ff. UR) praise Thucydides for reasons that we feel would fit *literati* better than historians, such as his talent for lifelike descriptions or his ability to move his audience.

When one compares such passages with others that concern the merits of tragic and epic poets,[3] one is apt to think that a boundary between literature and historiography hardly existed. This idea is reinforced by the observation that, apart from the acknowledged great historians, the field of ancient historiography shows a large number of representatives whom we, to judge from the surviving fragments and testimonies, would not really regard as serious historians, and who seem to have set themselves literary rather than scientific goals. We find it hard to understand that Polybius – who in many respects meets our standards of historiographical method – has to engage in polemics with competitors such as Phylarch or Philinus,[4] who, in our view, hardly deserve to be called historians.

A fascinating document from outside the Greek world is Cicero's much-quoted letter to the historian L. Lucceius (*Ad fam.* V.12). With this letter, Cicero seeks to persuade his addressee to make the history

---

[3] Athen. VI, 223 b-d; Schol. ad Dion. Thrac. 746 b.

[4] Polyb. II, 56 and I, 14.

of his consulate the subject of a separate monograph. The argument he uses to show that this would be a pre-eminently attractive subject for a historian, implicitly illustrates Cicero's conception of historiography. I quote what seems to me the most essential part:

> A principio enim coniurationis usque ad reditum nostrum videtur mihi modicum quoddam corpus confici posse, in quo et illa poteris uti civilium commutationum scientia vel in explicandis causis rerum novarum vel in remediis incommodorum, cum et reprehendes ea quae vituperanda duces, et quae placebunt exponendis rationibus comprobabis et, si liberius, ut consuesti, agendum putabis, multorum in nos perfidiam, insidias, proditionem notabis. (§4)

Thus, in a monograph of modest proportions, Lucceius could make use of his understanding of changes in society, and would be able to reveal the causes of revolutions and to indicate how the undesired may be prevented. More particularly, the subject provides him with an opportunity to decry what he thinks deserves disapproval and to recommend, stating his reasons, what he deems positive. All this may be done both in general and – in view of Lucceius' known candour – by calling to account specifically named individuals.

Cicero subsequently explains that the subject holds sufficient *varietas* to guarantee that the reader will derive from it the *voluptas* that goes with *misericordia* about the grief of others:

> viri saepe excellentis ancipites variique casus habent admirationem, expectationem, laetitiam, molestiam, spem, timorem; si vero exitu notabili concluduntur, expletur animus iucundissima voluptate (§5).

In the letter, these more fundamental considerations are preceded by the explicit request to write the monograph in such a way that a maximum amount of lustre is added to Cicero's own role in the events. To achieve this, the *leges historiae* – which forbid the historian to bend the truth – may, perhaps, be given a lower priority: *amorique nostro plusculum etiam quam concedet veritas largiare* (§3). Cicero wants to be praised by a man who is himself praiseworthy (§7: *laudari a laudato viro*), so that he may enjoy, during his lifetime, the modest fame he deserves: *ut (...) vivi gloriola nostra perfruamur* (§9).

The image of the historian that Cicero has in mind is strikingly similar to the image that is reflected by Lucian's essay. Evidently, ancient historians indeed ran the risk of becoming either too much of a panegyrist or too much of a poet: they were apparently allowed to praise their *personae*, and the value of their work may increase according to the amount of pleasure the reader derives from it: the char-

acteristics that Cicero feels make the *coniuratio* a suitable subject for historians show a considerable overlap with what makes a certain subject matter suitable for a tragedy.

What first and foremost distinguishes a historian from both the panegyric orator and the poet is his obligation to stick to the truth. Cicero and Lucian agree on that. Yet, it is the *reason* for setting this requirement which is essential for a clear understanding of what is at issue. The theory and practice of ancient historiography can only be fully understood if we realize that ancient historians were supposed to serve the truth not because otherwise they would fail to meet whatever scientific standards, but because their writings would otherwise be without any use. This crucial point remains implicit in Cicero's letter, but is expressed *disertis verbis* by Lucian: "it is the one and only task of history as well as its goal to offer what is useful, and that can only be inferred from what is true" (16: ἓν γὰρ ἔργον ἱστορίας καὶ τέλος, τὸ χρήσιμον, ὅπερ ἐκ τοῦ ἀληθοῦς μόνου συνάγεται). Historians who disregard the truth can no longer maintain that their work is useful: if the content of a story is determined by the intended literary effect or by encomiastic purposes, the reader cannot rely on the information he is offered to guide his future conduct. These authors are, therefore, not historians, but at best poets, or at worst, biased panegyrists.

Still, literature may be useful too. That it should preferably be so is a belief that was both advocated and disputed throughout antiquity. Literature which only establishes the *dulce* may be reprehensible but is still literature (or rather: ποίησις). Therefore, while it is arguable whether literature should yield benefits, a historian who does not aim to benefit his audience is at best a hybrid, not a historian *pur sang*.

Lucian, then, cannot be accused of a lack of understanding of the characteristics of historiography, as many a modern historian will be inclined to do. On the contrary, he hits the nail right on the head. In antiquity, history was at most, and even then only partly, what we might call an *applied* science: historians were not required to show disinterested curiosity, to strive for knowledge and understanding, irrespective of the applicability of their results. It is from this viewpoint that both the methodology and the practice of the full variety of ancient historiography can be understood and even justified.

As for methodology: most ancient historiographers see it as the task of the historian not just to record events, but also to find the *causes* of these events. To us, this may sound as a primary criterion of scientifically informed scholarship, but in the ancient frame of reference it

is no more than a condition to be met if the reader is to be presented with more than just a collection of data or an inconsequential story. A quotation from Polybius (III, 31, 12-13) may illustrate the point. "If one were to take out of historiography the treatment of the questions 'as a result of what', 'how' and 'to what purpose' people did what they did, and also the question whether we can explain the result of what was done, the only thing that would remain is a mere demonstration of rhetorical craftsmanship (*ἀγώνισμα*): the reader would learn nothing (*μάθημα δ' οὐ γίνεται*). He may experience momentary pleasure (*τέρπει*), but the work is of no possible benefit *for the future* (*πρὸς δὲ τὸ μέλλον οὐδὲν ὠφελεῖ τὸ παράπαν*)." The mere fact that Polybius expresses himself in much the same terms as Thucydides did in his well-known declaration of principles (I.22) shows that Polybius does not bring forward an opinion of his own, but one of the fundamental principles of almost all ancient historiography.

Cicero's words *exponendis rationibus* must be interpreted in a similar way. Here too, the issue is not a requirement of scholarship, but the observation that there is no point in encouraging the reader to act in a certain way, or discouraging him from doing so, if one cannot explain to him *why* one way is preferable to the other.

It would certainly be worthwhile to assess systematically the characteristics to be observed in the work of various types of ancient historians (such as the criteria for the selection of subjects, differences in choice and treatment of direct and indirect sources, etc.), taking one's point of departure not (as has often been done) from modern standards of historical method, but from their relevance to the ultimate objective of the authors concerned: to offer their audience something they can benefit from. It will appear that their ideas about the nature of the benefit to be offered will vary considerably, and that the different types of historiography we find in antiquity derive their characteristics from the various opinions concerning the kind of benefit a historian has to effectuate.

Such an assessment would also clarify why Thucydides is currently held in such high esteem as a scientific historian *avant la lettre*. His belief in the 'makability' of the future and in man's ability to take decisions that are based on reason is too limited for him to believe that yesterday's mistakes can be avoided tomorrow. That is why he does not want to go beyond an attempt at gaining insight into human nature, in order to track trends in the behaviour of individuals and societies. He is apparently led by the hope that – by analogy with

medicine – a basic prognosis could be achieved which could influence the politician's behaviour at least to some extent. 'Pragmatically' speaking, this is a modest pretension; to justify it, however, extremely high standards of method and analysis must be met. This seems to be the reason why many modern historians have a relatively close affinity with Thucydides, but it surely does not imply that Thucydides' ultimate goals are comparable to those of his modern colleagues. In short: Thucydides may be said to meet the requirements of what we call a scientific method because he wants to serve a pragmatic goal.[5]

Besides the type of historiography represented by Thucydides (among whose followers is the more naive and more optimistic Polybius), there is another one, which we would rather call *paraenetic*. Authors whose work belongs to this type are inspired by the conviction that behaviour that is in line with certain ethical-philosophical principles enhances human happiness, and they offer their readers historical material that will confirm this view. In Cicero's letter, this variety is clearly present. In the work of those who practise it, we find a comparatively tolerant attitude towards the obligation to base one's message on reliable evidence that has been carefully scrutinized. The authors who subscribe to this interpretation of the criterion of usefulness feel free to take their data from others, and to base their selection of subject matter on the relevance it will have to the paraenetic goal they have in mind. Stylistically also, there are differences: if one wants to communicate a belief, one is justified in utilizing the appropriate stylistic registers in order to be as persuasive as possible.

Plutarch's biographies provide an example of historiography of this type. As a historian he is currently not very highly esteemed, but by ancient standards what he did is completely legitimate, and compares favourably with the work of those who made themselves available for propagandistic writing. The latter, of course, will seek to justify themselves by stressing the ethical qualities and importance to society of their patrons, but their inclination to tamper with the truth in order to please the high and mighty distinguishes them quite sharply from those of their colleagues who aspired to a higher level of integrity: precisely this is the boundary that Cicero would like Lucceius occasionally to cross.

[5] A striking example of the misunderstandings that may occur is provided by Van Groningen (1953, 25), who excludes Thucydides from his treatment because, being "the most scientific of Greek historians", "he does not intend making any use of the knowledge acquired."

We are considerably farther removed from modern historical practice with those ancient historians who apparently thought it their primary task to present moving descriptions of the vicissitudes of the past. The material they offer will help the reader not to pitch his expectations of fortune and happiness at too high a level: he will thus be able to accept his own fate with resignation. This is also a kind of benefit, and one could maintain that in this case too, historians contribute to a 'philosophical' attitude to life. More often, however, the actual result will be that reading about the past just has a positive effect on the reader's present mood, either because remembering past misery will enhance his present feelings of security (*habet enim praeteriti doloris secura recordatio delectationem* says Cicero §4) or because he seeks diversion from today's misery, as Livy did:

> ego contra hoc quoque laboris praemium petam ut me a conspectu malorum, quae nostra tot per annos vidit aetas, tantisper certe, dum prisca illa tota mente repeto, avertam, omnis curae expers quae scribentis animum, etsi non flectere a vero, sollicitum tamen efficere posset (*Praefatio* 5).

Pleasure may also be derived from a deeply felt compassion for the suffering of others (Cic. §4) – from what Aristotle called ἔλεος, and the German tradition knows as "das Vergnügen an tragischen Gegenständen".

This type of historiography will almost inevitably come close to entertainment and sensational literature, the realm of *dulce*. The authors use the stylistic idiom appropriate to this, which makes them even more susceptible to the accusation that what they aim to achieve really belongs to the prerogative of the poet. The *utile* they accomplish, can in any case no longer be called χρήσιμον, but at the most ὠφέλιμον – the term that is also commonly used for poets.

The above, however sketchy, is meant to indicate that the full diversity of ancient historiography can only be explained if one is prepared to judge ancient historiographers by their own standards. Ancient historiography has no scientific pretensions in the sense that the disinterested search for a scientific explanation of past reality would constitute its main concern. What binds writers as diverse as Thucydides, Plutarch and Phylarch together is that they, all of them, aim to offer their readership something they may benefit from. What makes them historians is that they use past reality for this purpose. What makes them different from each other is first and foremost a

difference in opinion about the significance which one's acquaintance with the past may have for deciding upon a certain course of action in the future.

Cicero's letter to Lucceius, then, does not just contain arguments *pour les besoins de la cause*, but is based on an intelligent and adequate analysis of ancient historiographical aims and practices. Whichever category Lucceius prefers to belong to, Cicero's arguments will prevent him from justifying a refusal on account of there being a conflict with the professional standards of a respectable historian. The fact that a modern historian would indignantly reject Cicero's request, only confirms the major difference in opinion about the goal of historiography between antiquity and today.

Paradoxically, the one ancient historian who could most justifiably be said to have practised history as a science is Herodotus. His work aims to suggest that the confrontation between Persians and Greeks is exemplary for the 'laws' that control *la condition humaine* – laws from which the Greek world will not be able to escape.[6] The thought that insight into the relevant mechanisms – of which Herodotus makes both the nature and the workings visible – could prevent catastrophes is not one that will easily enter the mind of the readers of his work. Those who have read it may be in a better position to understand the course of history, but this will not enable them to change it. So one could say that Cicero, albeit unwittingly, was right in calling Herodotus the father of history as later generations have come to define it – although it would, of course, be sheer folly and arrogance to make Herodotus 'anticipate' later developments. It suffices to say that, to him, knowledge of and insight into the past were not instrumental in shaping the individual or collective future. The very fact that he does not aim at offering something that is *χρήσιμον* or *ὠφέλιμον* make his work a unique phenomenon in the history of ancient historiography.

What makes him even more exceptional is that he decided that a matter-of-fact message that is based on an unprecedented amount of evidence, was best served by putting to use his considerable command of the 'rhetoric of fiction'. It is relevant here to remember that Cicero's dictum (*De Legibus* I.5) that Herodotus is the *pater historiae*, which has been quoted *ad nauseam*, in its original context, served to legitimize the incorporation of fictional material – of *fabulae* – in a historical work by appealing to the authority of the founder of history.

[6] Cf. p. 156ff. of this volume.

It was precisely Herodotus' use of fictional episodes to convey the motives he ascribed to his characters, which – together with the absence of any pretence to usefulness – greatly harmed his reputation as a historian in antiquity.[7] So when (ps.)-Plutarch in his *De malignitate Herodoti* wanted to accuse him of malicious intent he could do so all the more easily because there was a sort of consensus that his victim could hardly claim to be a respectable historian anyway: measured by the standards of antiquity he was guilty both of neglecting the historian's primary task of offering something useful and of disregarding the *lex historiae* that one should speak the truth and nothing but the truth. So why not accuse him of having an axe to grind? The indisputable fact that, as Fornara (36) terms it, he was an "imaginative expounder of his material," should, however, not disqualify him as a historian – be it by ancient or by modern standards.

I have tried to argue the following:

1. The first and foremost criterion to be satisfied by a historian in antiquity is that his work must be useful. Other requirements to be met (truthfulness – the pre-eminent *lex historiae* –, attention to causal connections, etc.) are derived from and subservient to this. From this point of view, the actual practice of ancient historiography can be understood and evaluated. If we judge ancient historians by modern standards we may, of course, reject part of their practice as being 'unscientific', but, even though this in itself is not illegitimate, it is an un-historical pursuit. When we are using their writings as source material for our own research, we should, of course, be aware of the purpose they wanted to serve.

2. The writings of ancient historians can be categorized according to the nature of the usefulness aimed at by the authors. I have distinguished three types, ranging from a more or less immediate practical usefulness to a vague general edification. The demands of method and presentation that can be required of historians vary according to the position the author in question takes in this range. These variations help to explain why it was that some ancient historians were found to resemble panegyric orators and others were found to resemble poets without *ipso facto* losing the right to be called historians. Some of them, however, came dangerously close to the province of literature. After

[7] Cf. Momigliano *op. cit.*

all, the spectator of a tragedy also could be said to be both amused and 'educated' (μεθ' ἡδονῆς ἀπῆλθε παιδευθεὶς ἅμα).[8]

3. Cicero's letter to Lucceius can only be considered to betray its author's incomprehension of the historian's profession, if it is measured by modern standards. When considered in its own context and cultural environment, it testifies to Cicero's understanding of the characteristics and principles of ancient historiographical practice, and both confirms and helps to explain the diversity to be observed in this genre. Cicero may, perhaps, be criticized for having been unaware of the special position Herodotus occupied within the ancient historiographical spectrum. Yet this very position makes Herodotus' work more than that of any other ancient historian resemble the modern concept of historiography as a scientific discipline in its own right. This is surely not what Cicero meant when he called him the *pater historiae*, but it seems right and proper that it is Herodotus who, by using the word ἱστορία in the first sentence of his work, gave 'history' its name.[9]

---

[8] Timocles quoted by Athenaeus (VI.223b).

[9] It is gratifying to observe that this conclusion is in line with the last sentence of Momigliano's masterly study cited above: "it is a strange thought that Herodotus has really become the father of history only in modern times." The considerations that made Momigliano arrive at this conclusion are different from mine, but seem to be largely compatible with the above.

HOMO OR PHILOSOPHUS MENSURA?

To Marlein van Raalte

I don't say I don't *believe* it, I say I don't *know* it.
(Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*)

1. *Protagoras' epistemology*

Protagoras' famous *dictum* constituted the very beginning of a treatise (σύγγραμμα) that in Plato's time went under the title Ἀλήθεια.[1] There is no reason to doubt that Plato's quotation in the *Theaetetus* represents what Protagoras actually wrote to the letter:[2] πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἄνθρωπος, τῶν μὲν ὄντων ὡς ἔστιν, τῶν δὲ μὴ ὄντων ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν.

There seems to be a consensus about the correctness of the interpretation of the *dictum* Plato gave in the *Theaetetus*. As Plato reads him, Protagoras intended to say that all sensory appearances (αἰσθήσεις) and all beliefs (δόξαι) are true (ἀληθεῖς) for the person whose appearances or beliefs they are. This makes Protagoras into what is commonly termed an 'epistemological relativist' – and the main concern of most scholars and philosophers has been to find out, not whether that is to be considered a tenable position,[3] but whether Plato's attempt to prove that it is self-refuting was successful.

There is, however, some ground to consider the possibility that Plato's reading of Homo Mensura (hereafter: HM) represents what he thought to be its implications, rather than what Protagoras himself intended to convey.

> According to the tradition (*VS* 80A1 and 12), Protagoras was tried and expelled from Athens for the 'impiety' of his agnosticism, and his books were burnt in the agora after they had been called in from those who possessed them. The report has been called into doubt, but there is no conclusive proof that it has been made up.[4] If it is true, there may be

---

[1] *Tht.* 161c2-4: τὴν δ' ἀρχὴν τοῦ λόγου τεθαύμακα, ὅτι οὐκ εἶπεν ἀρχόμενος τῆς Ἀληθείας ὅτι Πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἐστὶν ὗς. Cf. *Crat.* 391b6.

[2] *Tht.* 152a2-4. Socrates' ἀνέγνωκας γάρ που; – together with Theaetetus' ἀνέγνωκα γὰρ πολλάκις – indicates that Plato intended to quote verbatim.

[3] "Indeed, global relativism at the level of 'true for me' has so little to recommend it that its popularity with ordinary people is truly astonishing." (C.A.J. Coady in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* s.v. "relativism, epistemological.")

[4] Cf. Kerferd 43, Guthrie III, 263 and Vlastos (1956) VIII.

a connection with the fact that Protagoras' Ἀλήθεια and Περὶ Θεῶν[5] do not figure in Diogenes' (ix.55) list of his surviving books (σῳζόμενα βιβλία): if all copies of these two books the Athenians could lay hands on were burnt, we will have to reckon with the possibility that even Plato did not have access to the complete text of Ἀλήθεια and of Περὶ Θεῶν, and had to build his interpretation of HM on combining the *dictum* as he quotes it with the content of other books in Diogenes' list, such as Τέχνη ἐριστικῶν, Περὶ πολιτείας, Περὶ ἀρετῶν, Περὶ τῆς ἐν ἀρχῇ καταστάσεως (commonly believed to be the source of the Myth in the *Protagoras*) and Ἀντιλογιῶν α', β'. This would, of course, considerably detract from Plato's authority as an interpreter of HM. It would also account for Plato's portraying Protagoras as an ἀντιλογικός who had a theory of his own on the subjects of society and morality – the more so when we bear in mind that Protagoras died when Plato was five or six years old.

Upon a careful reading of the *Theaetetus*, it strikes one that the introduction of the crucial concept of 'truth' takes place in at least five successive steps:

a. 152a6: "everything is, for me, as it appears to me, and is, for you, as it appears to you" (οἷα μὲν ἕκαστα ἐμοὶ φαίνεται, τοιαῦτα μὲν ἔστιν ἐμοί, οἷα δὲ σοί, τοιαῦτα δὲ αὖ σοί);[6]
b. 158a6: "the things which appear to anyone actually are (the case) for the person to whom they appear" (τὰ φαινόμενα ἑκάστῳ ταῦτα καὶ εἶναι τούτῳ ᾧ φαίνεται);
c. 158e6: "what seems to anyone on any occasion is true for the person to whom it seems so" (τὰ ἀεὶ δοκοῦντα τῷ δοκοῦντι εἶναι ἀληθῆ);
d. 160c7: "my perception is true for me" (ἀληθὴς ἄρα ἐμοὶ ἡ ἐμὴ αἴσθησις· τῆς γὰρ ἐμῆς οὐσίας ἀεὶ ἐστιν);
e. 161c2-3: "what seems to anyone actually is" (τὸ δοκοῦν ἑκάστῳ τοῦτο καὶ ἔστιν).

---

[5] Eusebius' report that there was a separate σύγγραμμα 'On the gods' has been doubted on the insufficient ground that (1) apparently, Diogenes (*VS* 253,28) was unable to cite the title of the book in question (ἀλλαχοῦ δὲ τοῦτον ἤρξατο τὸν τρόπον· Περί μὲν θεῶν κτλ.), and (2) "schwer zu sagen ist, was diese Schrift neben dem daraus angeführten Satz (...) noch viel enthalten haben sollte." (Von Fritz 1978, 116)

[6] Almost the same formula occurs in the *Cratylus* (386a1-3: οἷα μὲν ἂν ἐμοὶ φαίνηται τά πράγματα, τοιαῦτα μὲν ἔστιν ἐμοί· οἷα δ' ἂν σοί, τοιαῦτα δὲ σοί). There, however, Socrates skips the intermediate steps we find in the *Theaetetus*, and, without further ado expresses his conviction that, if Protagoras' belief that "as things seem to each man so they actually are" (οἷα ἂν δοκῇ ἑκάστῳ τοιαῦτα καὶ εἶναι: cf. *Theaet.* 161c2 together with 152a6) is true, one man cannot be wiser than another.

The first step is part of Socrates' rendering of what Protagoras himself intended to say (οὕτω πως λέγει ὡς...), and Theaetetus agrees that this is what Protagoras meant (λέγει γὰρ οὖν οὕτω). The other steps occur in the course of Socrates' further developing what he considers to be its implications – leading up to the phrasing at 161c2, that seems designed to bring out as clearly as possible the divergence from what Plato himself believed: it would be difficult to conceive of a statement that is as irreconcilable with Plato's epistemology as this one.

Step (a) is the only one where it is at least conceivable to take ἔστιν as what we nowadays call a copula, whereas, in step (b) this seems impossible. Only in steps (c) and (d) does Plato make it explicit that, for him, εἶναι and εἶναι ἀληθῆ are equivalent. In the final step (e) he returns to a simple ἔστιν. It would seem, then, that we cannot exclude the possibility that the equivalence of εἶναι and εἶναι ἀληθῆ, that is at the basis of Plato's argument against HM, originates with Plato rather than with Protagoras himself.

An attempt to find out what Protagoras meant by his statement may start with the observation that 'assertion' and 'denial' (φάσις and ἀπόφασις) are conspicuously absent from Protagoras' list of πυθμένες λόγων (Diogenes Laertius ix.53f. = *VS* 80 A 1, 254, 12-15): διεῖλε δὲ τὸν λόγον εἰς τέτταρα· εὐχωλήν, ἐρώτησιν, ἀπόκρισιν, ἐντολήν· οἱ δὲ εἰς ἑπτά· (i.e.: "according to others he made a division into seven items:)[7] διήγησιν, ἐρώτησιν, ἀπόκρισιν, ἐντολήν, ἀπαγγελίαν, εὐχωλήν, κλῆσιν, οὓς καὶ πυθμένας εἶπε λόγων.[8]

Most scholars take it that this classification is to be seen as a contribution to (the theory of) grammar – and is to be connected, for instance, with Protagoras' having distinguished three 'genders of names' (masculine, feminine, neuter). When, however, one considers the items on Diogenes' lists, it is, to say the least, not immediately clear how each and every one of them relates to 'grammar'. It seems preferable to regard the πυθμένες λόγων as something like our 'speech acts' or 'basic modes of speech', and to note that all the items have to do with interpersonal communication. On the basis of this, it seems reasonable to assume, by way of a working hypothesis, that Protagoras deliberately excluded φάσις and ἀπόφασις from his list because he re-

---

[7] The fact that Diogenes has a shorter as well as a longer list of πυθμένες may have its explanation in Protagoras having discussed the subject more than once.

[8] That the absence of φάσις and ἀπόφασις is not just a coincidence may be gathered from Alcidamas' alternative list: φάσις, ἀπόφασις, ἐρώτησις, προσαγόρευσις (D.L. *loc. cit.*).

garded the assertoric use of sentences as an instance of οὐκ ὀρθῶς λέγειν, or, to put it in semantic terms, because he held that using the verb εἶναι in a veridical sense[9] is to use it incorrectly.[10] This would seem to lend a special point to *Prot.* 360d, where Plato makes Protagoras refuse to assert or deny the content of Socrates' concluding question (τί δή, ὦ Πρωταγόρα, οὔτε σὺ φῂς ἃ ἐρωτῶ οὔτε ἀπόφῃς;).[11]

Protagoras' reasoning[12] may have been something like this: (a) by asserting or denying *q* a speaker in fact expresses his belief that *q* is 'true' c.q. 'false', in the sense of corresponding or not corresponding to the facts; (b) the addressee, on his part, is always at liberty to contest the speaker's belief, since "there are two opposing arguments concerning everything" (*VS* A 1: πρῶτος ἔφη δύο λόγους εἶναι περὶ παντὸς πράγματος ἀντικειμένους ἀλλήλοις – the expression περὶ πάντος πράγματος seems to confirm that the statement has something to do with HM); (c) from a viewpoint of interpersonal communication, the concept ἀληθές in the sense of 'true *simpliciter*' is, therefore, superfluous: if a thing is true for a person, if and only if that person believes that thing, the utterance 'I assert (or: I know) that *q* is true' is not essentially different from 'I believe that *q*.'

That Protagoras may indeed have meant something along these lines can be gathered from his so-called 'self-defence' in the *Theaetetus*. There, Plato makes him point out that, for him, the concept of 'truth' is irrelevant: "what never happens is that a man who believes what is false is made to believe what is true" (167a6-7: ἐπεὶ οὔ τί γε ψευδῆ δοξάζοντά τίς τινα ὕστερον ἀληθῆ ἐποίησε δοξάζειν). Even if one manages to convince a sick man that his present beliefs are due to his sick-

---

[9] Cf. Arist. *Met.* 1017a31: ἔτι τὸ εἶναι σημαίνει καὶ τὸ ἔστιν ὅτι ἀληθές, τὸ δὲ μὴ εἶναι ὅτι οὐκ ἀληθὲς ἀλλὰ ψεῦδος.

[10] In the *Cratylus* (391c2-7), Hermogenes refuses to recognize Protagoras as an authority on the subject of ὀρθότης ὀνομάτων, because it would be inconsistent to repudiate his 'truth' and at the same time to attach any value to what he has to say within the framework of the 'truth' as he sees it (εἰ τὴν μὲν ἀλήθειαν [Burnet and the editors of the new Oxford text print a capital] τὴν Πρωταγόρου ὅλως οὐκ ἀποδέχομαι, τὰ δὲ τῇ τοιαύτῃ ἀληθείᾳ ῥηθέντα ἀγαπῴην ὥς του ἄξια). This seems to confirm that the issue of ὀρθότης ὀνομάτων had something to do with HM, although Hermogenes' wording does not necessarily imply that – as Diels has it (*ad VS* 80A24) – Protagoras' treatment of the πυθμένες λόγων was actually part of his Ἀλήθεια.

[11] Cf. p. 198 of this volume.

[12] We may, of course, not credit Protagoras with the sophisticated arguments used by Plato's contemporaries (such as Antisthenes or the Megarians) on the subject of Language, Thought, Truth and Falsehood.

ness, it betrays a lack of experience (ἀπειρία) to call the 'sick belief' *false*, or the 'healthy belief' *true* (*ib.* 167b1-3). To borrow the examples used by Aristotle and Russell: even if a man believes that he is a trireme or a poached egg, it is no use arguing that what he says is not true, since he can always argue to the contrary or just refuse to accept the conclusion of what his conversation partner considers to be a compelling argument.

Read in this way, the significance of HM hinges on the semantics of εἶναι, ἀληθές and ψεῦδος rather than on whether HM itself is 'true' or 'false'. Even if my conversation partner is prepared to accept my claim that I am saying 'what is', or that what I am saying is 'true', he is, in fact, doing nothing more than expressing his own belief that what I am saying corresponds to the facts as he believes them to be. As a consequence of this, there is no sense in maintaining that a statement is true or false *simpliciter*, and speaking about impersonal, 'objective' 'truth' is vacuous. When we are asked (ἐρώτησις) whether we think that something is or is not the case, the correct phrasing of the answer (ἀπόκρισις) has to be something like 'it seems to me/I believe (φαίνεται/δοκεῖ μοι) that *q* c.q. –*q*'.

This is, of course, not to exclude that there may be an independent reality, nor that the content of a statement may happen to correspond to it, but only to explain that one should refrain from expressing oneself in a way that implies the ability to guarantee that one's belief is actually true. Consequently, λέγειν τἀληθῆ and λέγειν τὸ ὄν/τὰ ὄντα cannot be considered useful expressions, and there seems to be no point in defining a philosopher as an ἐραστὴς τοῦ ὄντος καὶ ἀληθείας (*Pol.* 501 d2), let alone a basis for Plato's conviction that non-philosophers must subject themselves to the philosopher's final authority.

I submit, then, that the content of HM may be paraphrased by something like:

(It is my opinion that) Man is the measure of everything:
when he believes that 'S is F', then for him 'S is F',
when he believes that 'S is not F', then for him, 'S is not F'.

By way of a commentary on the text of HM the following observations can be made.[13]

[13] For a useful survey and bibliography of the literature on the subject see Huss 1996.

χρημάτων: There is a real danger of over-interpretation,[14] since, in a case like this, *χρημάτων* (or *πραγμάτων*) seems to be idiomatic: it is to support the status of *πάντων* as a neuter noun. We may compare *Prot.* 361b1-2, where Socrates has it that *πάντα χρήματα ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη, καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη καὶ ἡ σωφροσύνη καὶ ἡ ἀνδρεία*, and apparently means to say that *everything* (we have discussed), *be it justice, prudence or courage, is knowledge* rather than *all 'things' are knowledge, justice &c. among them.* In the same way, Protagoras' *πάντων χρημάτων* just refers to the *ὄντα* and *μὴ ὄντα* that specify it. We should therefore translate *Man is the measure of everything: of what is, that it is, of what is not, that it is not* – remaining aware of the fact that this 'literal' translation does not bring out that the Greek has *μὴ* and not *οὐκ ὄντων*.[15]

ἄνθρωπος: Nowadays, most scholars would agree that *ἄνθρωπος* refers to each individual member of the species rather than to mankind taken as a single entity.[16]

μέτρον: I doubt whether the term was "chosen by Protagoras for the epigrammatic flavour which it gives to his very quotable saying" (Guthrie III, 183): this is a gratuitous assumption, and, *pace* Guthrie, I am far from certain that "Plato, followed by Sextus, was right in explaining it as *kriterion*, 'standard of judgement'."[17] It would seem rather unnatural for someone who holds the opinion that it is impossible to decide whether a belief is true or false, to use a term that, by its etymological connection with *κρίνειν, κριτής* &c., is at home in the semantic field of 'deciding a dispute', 'giving a final judgement'. I would therefore suppose that Protagoras deliberately used *μέτρον* because he wished to avoid the connotations that go with *κριτήριον*. *πάντων χρημάτων* **κ ρ ι τ ή ρ ι ο ν* *ἄνθρωπος* at the most would express something of a paradox: 'if you are looking for a (decisive) criterion by which to judge whether some statement is true or false, I maintain that you yourself are that criterion.' It is, of course, perfectly understandable that Plato was strongly inclined to read HM in this way.

ὡς: I would agree with Guthrie (190) both that "translating 'how' rather than 'that' is, at most, a matter of interpretation in context," and that the

---

[14] One may compare, for instance, Pl. *Euthyd.* 294d1-2 (*ὡμολογησάτην πάντα χρήματα ἐπίστασθαι*) and Anaxag. *VS* B1 (*ὁμοῦ πάντα χρήματα ἦν*) in order to see that the various attempts that have been made to stress its etymological connection ('something one uses') are both unnecessary and artificial.

[15] On the difference this makes, see below. There is no need to argue, with Von Fritz (1978, 111-2), that "Die auf dem ersten Blick etwas seltsame Formulierung des Satzes ist (...) ebenso verständlich und natürlich im Hinblick auf die Protagoras vorausgehende Philosophie, als es für Platon, dem warm und kalt zu einfachen *ποιότητες* geworden waren, natürlich war, das *ὡς* durch *οἷα* zu ersetzen."

[16] Cf. *Tht.* 152a8: *ἄνθρωπος δὲ σύ τε κἀγώ.*

[17] To say, as Guthrie (183-4) does, that the synonymity of *μέτρον* and *κριτήριον* is confirmed by the fact that Aristotle (*Met.* 1053a31) read Protagoras in that way is, of course, to beg the question.

translation 'that' "is made overwhelmingly probable by its setting, especially in the negative clause ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν (...)."[18]

μή: The mere fact that Plato gives the statement in the form of an *accusativus cum infinitivo* is no reason to prefer (with Diels: "οὐκ ὄντων Sext., Diog.: μή [indirekt] Platon.") Sextus' and Diogenes' reading τῶν οὐκ ὄντων: there is no indication that Sextus and/or Diogenes had access to Protagoras' book, and we cannot rule out the possibility that they were influenced by Plato's (and/or Aristotle's) interpretation. It is to be noted that, if Protagoras wrote οὐκ, he himself would have built in the basis for Plato's attempt to prove that HM is self-refuting, since οὐκ would deprive the statement of its conditional character, and thereby would imply that there *is* an objective reality; with μή, however, the statement can be read both in the way Plato did ('whenever *S is not F*, then (for him) *S is not F*') and in the way I would prefer ('whenever he believes/says that *S is not F*, then (for him) *S is not F*').

It is of some importance to realize that, if this reading of HM is correct, when uttering it, we are merely expressing a debatable opinion or a belief. We are not making an assertion in the technical sense of the word, since there is no claim that the propositional content of the sentence is 'true', either for the speaker or for his audience. So Protagoras would have had no problem with Plato's (or others')[19] attempt to prove that his statement is self-refuting: he would have replied that he did not at all intend to make an *assertion*, but just to offer an opinion for discussion – the only necessary conditions for eventually reaching agreement with others about its content being that the conversation partner (1) 'speaks the same language' in the sense of attaching the same meaning to the same words, and keeping to the same rules of ὀρθοέπεια, and (2) refrains from contradicting himself.

One may even argue that HM itself cannot be said to be 'true' or 'false', since it does not intend to describe a state of affairs and, therefore, is not answerable to 'reality'. In my reading of HM, Protagoras' intention was not to deny the *existence* of an independent standard by which human beings can distinguish true statements from false ones,

---

[18] Guthrie further compares *VS* 80B4 (περὶ μὲν θεῶν οὐκ ἔχω εἰδέναι, οὔθ' ὡς εἰσὶν οὔθ' ὡς οὐκ εἰσίν) and the Hippocratic treatise *De arte*, ch. 2 = vi,4 L. (τῶν γε μὴ ἐόντων τίνα ἂν τις οὐσίαν θεησάμενος ἀπαγγείλειεν ὡς ἔστιν).

[19] Cf. Taylor (*Oxford Companion to Philosophy* s.v. 'Protagoras'): "either the theory undermines itself by asserting as an objective truth that there is no objective truth, or it merely asserts as a subjective truth that there is no objective truth. But to assert a subjective truth is to make no assertion. So either the theory refutes itself, or it asserts nothing."

but just to propose a rule for the correct use of language: we should not express ourselves in such a way as to imply that we are able to guarantee that our beliefs are true, since, in the end, our conversation partners always have to decide for themselves whether to accept or to reject the propositional content of any statement we are making.

The fact that one subscribes to the content of HM does not make one into a subjectivist or into a solipsist, for we can, of course, seek agreement both on the *μαθήματα* on which to base an argument, and on a set of argument schemas, so as to provide us with the tools to persuade others to believe something we want them to believe: "If you want to or have to persuade someone else, you must appeal to those things of which the other person is the measure, which means to such experiences as the other already possesses. (...) Whenever a plurality of persons agree, a common measure has arisen."[20]

2. *Protagoras on the gods*

Eusebius (*Praep.Ev.* xiv 3,7 = *VS* 80B4) informs us that, at the beginning of his book Περὶ θεῶν, Protagoras stated the following:

> *περὶ μὲν θεῶν οὐκ ἔχω εἰδέναι, οὔθ' ὡς εἰσὶν οὔθ' ὡς οὐκ εἰσὶν οὔθ' ὁποῖοί τινες ἰδέαν· πολλὰ γὰρ τὰ κωλύοντα εἰδέναι ἥ τ' ἀδηλότης καὶ βραχὺς ὢν ὁ βίος τοῦ ἀνθρώπου.*

As to the interpretation of these sentences, I would suggest that Diels was right in understanding *ἡ ἀδηλότης* as referring to "Nichtwahrnehmbarkeit" (sc. of the gods) rather than to something like 'uncertainty' or 'obscurity' (*viz.* of the subject): technically speaking, saying that the gods are *ἄδηλοι* amounts to saying that one finds it impossible to 'find a common measure', since nobody can point to an entity that actually answers the lexical definition of *god*, or provide an ostensive definition of what the 'name' *god* refers to.[21] The relevance of human life being finite is that man's very mortality prevents him

---

[20] The quotation has been taken from Mansfeld 47. Cf. Kerferd 1967, 505.

[21] Kerferd (1981, 166) compares Plutarch's *Life of Pericles* (8), where Pericles (on the authority of Stesimbrotus FGrH 107F9) is credited with saying that those who died at Samos were immortal, *καθάπερ τοὺς θεούς· οὐδὲ γὰρ ἐκείνους αὐτοὺς ὁρῶμεν, ἀλλὰ ταῖς τιμαῖς ἃς ἔχουσι καὶ τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς ἃ παρέχουσιν ἀθανάτους εἶναι τεκμαιρόμεθα.* Protagoras, however, would hardly have subscribed to using Anaxagoras' *ὄψις τῶν ἀδήλων τὰ φαινόμενα* for making inferences about the existence or non-existence of a phenomenon that is, by definition, immortal.

from deciding either to believe or not to believe statements about the existence and the characteristics of immortal beings.[22]

It seems, then, that where the gods are concerned, Protagoras saw no way to form an opinion about their existence or non-existence, or – *a fortiori* – about their 'qualities'. The implication of this would seem to be that he saw no basis for finding 'a common measure', and, therefore, for discussing the subject with others. This is in full accordance with a passage in the *Theaetetus*, where Plato makes him reproach his opponents for dragging in gods, "whose existence or nonexistence I exclude from all discussion, written or spoken."[23] So, Protagoras did not 'suspend his judgement', or 'withhold his verdict': he must be termed an 'agnosticist' in the full sense of one who finds himself unable to have an arguable belief about the existence of gods.[24] As a direct consequence of HM, he will have admitted that others are entitled to their own beliefs about the subject. We may, however, note in passing that Protagoras probably would have refused to discuss entities such as Plato's eternal forms or Aristotle's Prime Mover.

3. *Protagoras' ethics*

> Our intelligence helps us to delay our death as long as we can. How can we preserve our species as long as possible? The most natural starting point of human thought is: prolongation of our presence on earth.
>
> (György Konrád, *NRC-Handelsblad* 16.1.1993)

In the Myth in the *Protagoras*, the audience are told that Epimetheus and Prometheus were given the task of assigning to the different species the faculties (*δυνάμεις*) they need for their preservation (*σωτηρία*

---

[22] Protagoras' statement may have been both inspired by and directed against Xenophanes (*VS* 21B34). Xenophanes, however, "did not suggest that one could not be certain that a belief was *wrong*; and his destructive criticism of the Homeric gods, based as it was on a demonstrated subjectivity, might be accepted as true." (quoted from Kirk & Raven 180). I do not subscribe to Kerferd's (163-4) making Xenophanes "anticipate" Protagoras.

[23] *Tht.* 162e1-2: *οὓς ἐγὼ ἔκ τε τοῦ λέγειν καὶ τοῦ γράφειν περὶ αὐτῶν ὡς εἰσὶν ἢ ὡς οὐκ εἰσίν, ἐξαιρῶ*. The passage has been neglected by many of those who have discussed the subject, probably because Diels decided to omit it from his *testimonia*.

[24] It seems senseless to speculate whether Protagoras' book "upheld religious worship and cult according to the ancestral *nomoi*." (Guthrie, III, 235). As to the presence of the gods in the myth in the *Protagoras*, "the fact that it *is* a myth deprives it of any possible conflict with Protagoras' agnosticism." (Kerferd 168). So we are in no position to tell whether "the instinct of worship was probably in his view an original and ineradicable trait of human nature." (Guthrie *ib.*)

τοῦ γένους, μή τι γένος ἀϊστωθείη). In order to survive, each species is in need of protection both against destruction by another species and against the elements. Epimetheus achieves the former by allotting different faculties to different species, and the latter by clothing every species in such a way that it can protect itself against heat and cold. When it comes to mankind's turn, he has used up all the faculties. As a means of preservation for mankind Prometheus steals from Hephaestus and Athena their technical skill (*τὴν ἔντεχνον σοφίαν, τὴν περὶ τὸν βίον σοφίαν*) along with the use of fire, thus enabling men and women to develop religion, language, and the provision of shelter, clothing &c. At first they live in isolation, but when the fear of wild animals drives them together they are unable to refrain from doing injury to one another. Zeus decides to save the species (*γένος*) from destruction, and orders Hermes to bring them the faculties of refraining from violence (*αἰδώς*), and of adhering to an established distribution of territory and all sorts of goods (*δίκη*), thereby enabling them to show mutual solidarity (*φιλία*). Hermes is instructed to see to it that – unlike the crafts, where one person practising, for instance, the art of medicine suffices for many people – everyone receives these gifts, for only then is social life possible. Anyone incapable of acquiring his share of civic virtue is to be put to death as a disease of society.

The two main points in this story seem to be the following:

(1) Human *σοφία*[25] is to be ranked with the faculties (*δυνάμεις*) the animals have got for preserving their species: it is to be seen as an *instrument* that enables men and women to devise the means to protect themselves from death – such as building houses, making clothes and growing food. It should be noted that the faculty of language is explicitly assigned to the same domain, presumably because, if human beings were unable to communicate with one another, specialization and the division of labour would have been impossible.

(2) As to 'civic virtue', the basic view conveyed by the parable is that the ability to communicate by means of language is not sufficient as a basis for concerted action. In order to be able to found cities, mankind is in need of yet another *δύναμις*, that contributes to the *σωτηρία τοῦ γένους* by curbing their propensity to mutual aggression. It is relevant to note, with Kahn (218), that, at *Phaedo* 82a10ff., Plato seems to refer to Protagoras' notion of virtue: there, Socrates describes a form of *δημοτικὴ καὶ πολιτικὴ ἀρετή* (...) *ἣν δὴ καλοῦσι σωφροσύνην*

[25] It can hardy be a coincidence that the term *ἐπιστήμη* does not occur in the Myth.

τε καὶ δικαιοσύνην, ἐξ ἔθους τε καὶ μελέτης γεγοννῖαν ἄνευ φιλοσοφίας τε καὶ νοῦ.[26] He compares those who possess it to "other kinds of social and disciplined creatures, such as bees, wasps and ants", granting that the members of the human race (*ἀνθρώπινον γένος*) referred to may become decent citizens (*ἄνδρες μέτριοι*), and contrasting their virtue with that of the true philosopher "who abstains from all bodily desires (...) and is not afraid "of ruining his estate (*οἰκοφθορία*) or poverty." This amounts to a recognition on Plato's part of the, albeit limited, positive contribution Protagoras had made to 'morality' – which is all the more significant when we realize that, in Protagoras' active years, a cooperative conception of *ἀρετή* was surely not, as Kahn (224) has it, traditional or conventional. By characterizing it as *δημοτική*, Plato conveys that it is within reach of the un-philosophic 'multitude', not that is was "vulgar" or "popular."

It would appear that Protagoras shared Plato's diagnosis that the sharp dividing lines between political factions made citizens into each other's enemies (*ἐχθροί*) and thus endangered the minimum of mutual solidarity (*φιλία*) that is necessary to prevent society from disintegrating to the point of engaging in civil war (*στάσις*) – the difference being, of course, that Protagoras did not live to witness and experience the consequences of the violent conflict between 'democrats' and 'oligarchs' that occurred when the deficit of Pericles' and Cleon's policy had become manifest. Precisely this difference may have been one of the reasons why Plato had no confidence whatsoever in Protagoras' recipe for establishing – as it is termed in the Myth – *πόλεων κόσμοι τε καὶ δεσμοὶ φιλίας συναγωγοί*. So, precisely because he subscribed to Protagoras' diagnosis that permanent conflicts of interest between citizens threaten the very life of society,[27] he decided that it was necessary to enforce the unity of citizens by subjecting them to the authority of those who are entitled to guide them because they *know*.

An important consequence of the view on morality that is reflected by the Myth is that, according to Protagoras, there is no such thing as moral excellence in itself, or for its own sake. The Myth can be described as a specimen of ethical consequentialism or 'instrumentalism'. It finds the basic and ultimate criterion that is to guide decisions of a moral nature in the preservation of human life: the pursuit of personal

---

[26] Cf. *VS* B 3: *ἐν τῷ ἐπιγραφομένῳ μεγάλῳ λόγῳ ὁ Πρωταγόρας εἶπε· φύσεως καὶ ἀσκησέως διδασκαλία δεῖται*, and B 10: *μηδὲν εἶναι μήτε τέχνην ἄνευ μελέτης, μήτε μελέτην ἄνευ τέχνης.*

[27] Cf. Arends 1988.

well-being of each individual must be limited to the extent that it is believed by a majority to put at risk the life of all. For that reason, a 'common measure' must be found by the majority of those who constitute the community in order to decide which restrictions on the freedom of its members are necessary.[28]

The important thing, then, about human intelligence is not that it would enable mankind to find out what is true or false, nor that it would provide them with the capacity of gaining access to the knowledge of unchanging principles according to which human society is to be regulated. Both the faculty of σοφία (including speech), and the faculty[29] of maintaining a minimum of mutual solidarity are, so to speak, part of the make-up of human beings: they are subservient to our survival, on a par with the faculties the animals use in fighting *their* struggle for life.

When we try to figure out how the general purport of the Myth relates to the content of HM, we have to realize that, from a pragmatic point of view, making an assertion and expressing a belief differ in that beliefs, together with other mental states, function as *reasons for action*. HM is compatible with the belief that our intelligence enables us to draw on the information (μαθήματα)[30] we derive from our own and others' previous experiences in order to develop strategies to enhance our well-being and protect ourselves and our species from death. The principal motive we have for expressing our beliefs, and for making others share them, is that we often are in need of concerted action – whereas, where assertions are concerned, we may

---

[28] Protagoras' underlying assumptions are, in some respects, similar to the findings of modern biologists, ecologists, game theorists &c. Cf., for instance, Ridley 182: "Those groups in which cooperation thrived were the ones which flourished and, bit by bit, the habit of human cooperation sank deep into the human psyche."

[29] The wording at *Prot.* 322d1-5 makes it clear that the necessary condition for founding a city is that everyone has the *faculty* of sharing in αἰδώς and δίκη: only those who cannot partake in αἰδώς and δίκη (322d4-5: τὸν μὴ δυνάμενον αἰδοῦς καὶ δίκης μετέχειν) are to be excluded from the community. At 323c5 Protagoras sets out to explain that μετέχειν αὐτῆς (sc. [πολιτικῆς] ἀρετῆς) is not the same as having actually acquired it.

[30] I would be inclined to assume that for the 'data' we derive from our experience of the world and from what we are told by others (such as, for instance, by 'professionals' such as a doctor or an engineer) Protagoras would have used the word μαθήματα. Cf., for instance, *Prot.* 318e ff., where Protagoras characterizes the content of his teaching (εὐβουλία) as a μάθημα. It is Socrates who replaces it with πολιτικὴ τέχνη. In his conversation with Hippocrates, Socrates himself describes the sophist as a κάπηλος τῶν ἀγωγίμων ἀφ' ὧν ἡ ψυχὴ τρέφεται, i.e. μαθημάτων (313c5-7).

leave it at 'agreeing to disagree'. To take a random example: 'I know I'm in pain' is at best (except, that is to say, in a conversation between philosophers) an emphatic avowal of my being in pain, that is meant to invite my doctor to do something about it rather than to tell me whether I am right or wrong.

4. *Aristotle*

It is not surprising that Aristotle followed Plato in attempting to demonstrate that HM is indefensible. Aristotle does so in a passage in his *Metaphysics* (1006a1ff.),[31] where he defends the *principium contradictionis* against those who maintain "that the same thing can be and not be." There is no need to recount here the complex argument he offers in defence of this "most indisputable of all principles." It is, however, relevant to my present purpose to note that Aristotle distinguishes those who need persuasion (πειθώ) from those who need force (βία). The former – such as Anaxagoras, Democritus or Heraclitus – "can easily be cured of their ignorance, for it is not their expressed argument but their *thought* that one has to meet." Protagoras, however, is supposed to be one of those "who argue for the sake of argument": they can be refuted only "by healing (ἴασις)[32] the argument *as expressed in words*" (1009a17ff.).[33] Aristotle's own answer to Protagoras constitutes, so to speak, a three-stage rocket:

(1) If Protagoras is one of those who, through want of education, demand that there shall be demonstration of absolutely everything, he must agree that "if there are things of which one should not demand demonstration" he cannot say "what principle he regards as more indemonstrable than the present one" (1006a4ff.). The Protagorean reply to this would be that the *principium contradictionis* is just a rule of conversation and/or logic: if one's conversation partner keeps saying that he both believes and does not believe the same thing, no 'common measure' can be found. In his list of πυθμένες λόγων he himself has anticipated Aristotle's observation that (...) συμβαίνει τοῖς λέγουσι τὸν λόγον τοῦτον (...) ὅτι οὐκ ἀνάγκη ἢ φάναι ἢ ἀπόφαναι.

(2) If Protagoras is merely "seeking compulsion in argument" he is one of those who "seek what is impossible; for they demand to be made to contradict themselves, while they are contradicting them-

[31] Translations are quoted from the revised Oxford translation.

[32] Aristotle expresses himself in a strikingly Platonic way.

[33] This is, in fact, the strategy used by Plato in his *Protagoras*.

selves from the very first" (1011a15 f.). The validity of this argument seems to depend on the validity of Socrates' 'clinching' argument in the *Theaetetus*.

(3) "But perhaps for this reason those who argue thus not because they feel a difficulty but for the sake of argument, should say that this is not true, but true for this man (ἀνάγκη λέγειν ὅτι οὐκ ἔστιν ἀληθὲς τοῦτο, ἀλλὰ τούτῳ ἀληθές).[34] And as has been already said, they must make everything relative – relative to thought and perception, so that nothing either has come to be or will be without someone's first thinking so. But if things *have* come to be or will be, evidently not all things will be relative to opinion." (1011b1 ff.) To this Protagoras may object that he is not an ontological subjectivist: if there is no possibility to *know* whether what I perceive corresponds to any independent reality, this does in itself not entail that nothing can exist without my thinking so. It does, of course, entail that nothing can be *known* to exist just because of our believing (or even 'proving') it to exist: Protagoras' opinion on the existence or non-existence of Platonic 'Forms' or a 'Prime Mover' would have been the same as his opinion regarding the gods.

Aristotle, then, attempted to deal with HM by arguing that its implications would deprive us of the very principles of philosophical thinking. If, however, Protagoras did regard φάσις and ἀπόφασις as instances of οὐκ ὀρθῶς λέγειν, then HM may resist Aristotle's criticism even better than Plato's way of dealing with it in the *Protagoras*. Protagoras would probably not even have been prepared to comply with what Aristotle considers a *conditio sine qua non* for arguing with anybody: the admission that the mere willingness to listen to reason implies that at least "something is *true* apart from demonstration" (*Met.* 1006a26 f.: ὁ τοῦτο συγχωρήσας συγκεχώρηκέ τι ἀληθὲς εἶναι χωρὶς ἀποδείξεως).

Together, Plato and Aristotle have succeeded remarkably well in reducing Protagoras' influence on European philosophy to virtually zero. We had to wait until irritation with the scholasticism he was taught in university motivated Hobbes to devise an ethical system which takes its point of departure from an analysis of man in his

[34] This amounts to inviting Protagoras to express himself in such way that his thesis will be open to refutation. The way Aristotle expresses himself seems to rule out the possibility that he intends to refer to a belief he presumed to have been actually held by Protagoras himself. It would seem that he is referring to Plato's argument in the *Theaetetus*, where this way of reading HM is, after all, part of Socrates' strategy to refute the strongest version of Protagoras' statement he can imagine.

natural state that comes close to Protagoras' description of human society as it was before Zeus decided to intervene.[35] The limitations of both demonstrative (deductive) and causal (inductive) reasoning for establishing the truth of metaphysical beliefs only became a serious subject for discussion between respectable philosophers in the period of the Enlightenment.

It would, of course, be exaggerated to regard Protagoras as a Hobbes or a Hume *avant la lettre*. It seems, however, safe to conjecture that his "Truth", together with his "On the Original State of Man" represented a far from trivial attack on Parmenides' 'Way of Truth' and on the kind of moral philosophy that goes with it. The sheer number of those who have been inclined to follow Plato and Aristotle does not prove Protagoras' position to be logically untenable or morally discreditable: *πολλὰ καὶ ἄλλα οὐκ ὀρθῶς λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι* (*Prot.* 352e3).[36]

[35] In Hobbes' case it was the Anglican bishop and moral philosopher Richard Cumberland who, in his *De legibus naturae*, set out to refute him by showing that one can develop a moral theory that is both based on the evidence of sense and experience and in accordance with the rules of behaviour as we find them in the Bible. In order to achieve this, Cumberland made the momentous decision to substitute a principle very much like Bentham's "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" for "the greatest amount of life for each individual" which had guided Hobbes. He appears to have done so because, as a Christian, he was not prepared to regard only those actions to be immoral which, for the time being, are forbidden – the 'law of God' being a universal law which is independent of time or circumstances.

[36] I want to thank Richard Bemelmans, who, during a seminar on Plato's *Theaetetus*, proved a both expert and patient sparring partner, and who tactfully helped me to improve on an earlier version of the above argument.

PLATO'S *PROTAGORAS*: A 'BATTLE OF WITS'?

In memoriam J.H. Waszink

'But we're not talking about legality, we're talking about morality'.
His sister asked: 'Are they different?'
'That's the question, isn't it? Are they, Adam?'
It was the first time he had used Dalgliesh's Christian name. Dalgliesh said: 'You're assuming there's an absolute morality independent of time or circumstance.'
'Wouldn't you make that assumption?'
'Yes, I think I would, but I'm not a moral philosopher.' (P.D. James)

1. *The problem*

Compared to other so-called aporetic dialogues, Plato's *Protagoras* has a number of peculiar characteristics, which have puzzled many interpreters: "if the *Protagoras* is one of the most brilliant of Plato's dialogues, it is also one of the most perplexing."[1] Although nobody seems prepared to go as far as Gigon, who even questioned Plato's authorship of the dialogue, many scholars are reluctant to credit Socrates (let alone Plato) with the views he expresses in the course of his conversation with Protagoras. Some critics have sought to appease their uneasiness by dating the dialogue at the earliest possible moment in Plato's career,[2] others by considering it to be a specimen of literary artistry rather than of philosophical profundity: "If we look to the *Protagoras* for philosophical lessons, it may seem an irritating patchwork of niggling argument, irrelevant discussions, false starts and downright fallacy. Read as a play in which the most outstanding and individual

---

[1] Kahn 1996, 210.

[2] Von Arnim considered the *Protagoras* to be Plato's very first dialogue. Von Wilamowitz dated it before 399, "die Zeit, da er sich im Umgange mit Sokrates bildet, ohne doch recht zu wissen, wohin er sein Leben richten wird." According to Guthrie (IV, 235) it must at least precede Plato's visit to Italy: "it shows no trace of the mathematical, metaphysical and eschatological interests which link Plato with the Pythagoreans." Cf. Wilamowitz 1920, I, 153: " (...) täuscht sich selbst jede Exegese, die darauf aus ist, ihm hier das unterzuschieben, was er später einmal wissen und sagen wird." Ledger, however, includes the dialogue in an early middle group, which would imply that it was written after Plato's return to Athens in 387. As far as I can see, there is nothing against and much in favour of accepting Kahn's hypothesis (58-9) that the *Protagoras* belongs to a group of "threshold" dialogues, which fall in between the *Gorgias* and the *Symposium*, in the middle and late 380s.

minds of a brilliant period meet and engage in a battle of wits, it will give a different impression. That is how it should be read. A serious discussion of the nature of virtue, and how it is acquired, must be left, as Protagoras said,[3] for another occasion – and, we may add, for a different company; it is not to be achieved in the competitive atmosphere of a public gathering of Sophists."[4]

In the following I will argue that a number of characteristic features of the dialogue are bound up with the specific difficulties Plato encountered when he attempted to deal with the views of someone whose attitude towards knowledge and truth made it next to impossible to find a common ground on which to base a 'Socratic' conversation.[5] In doing so, I hope to make it clear that the dialogue, though it is no doubt part of what Kahn has termed "Plato's literary plan for presenting his philosophical views to the general public," differs from the other aporetic dialogues in that its aim is a negative rather than a positive one. It seems designed to bring home to the reader that Protagoras' stance on the subject of knowledge and truth is incompatible with his claiming to be a 'teacher of virtue'. It is an 'apotreptic' rather than a protreptic dialogue – seeking to immunize the reader against the attractions of what may have seemed to him a less exacting and less otherwordly alternative for the Socratic commitment to the moral life Plato was preaching. This would seem to imply that Plato himself was aware of the strength of an opponent who offered a rival programme[6] for ensuring πόλεων κόσμοι τε καὶ δεσμοὶ φιλίας συναγωγοί,

---

[3] This is misleading: it is in fact Socrates himself who, at 361c2-5, observes that the conversation has resulted in utter confusion, and declares himself eager to have it all cleared up by inquiring into the question that has motivated him all the time: τί ποτ' ἐστὶν αὐτό, ἡ ἀρετή. At 361e5, a courteous Protagoras declares himself willing to have another conversation, whenever Socrates wishes.

[4] Guthrie *loc.cit.* Cf., more recently, Rutherford 1995, 139-40: "(...) the dialogue cannot be an ideal model of dialectical argument on *arete*; it is contaminated by other motives and methods, affected by the agonistic tendencies of the sophists, soured by *philonikia* ('desire to win') on at least one side, and set against a background of spectators who want a good show rather than a philosophically correct solution."

[5] One remembers John Stuart Mill, who as a perceptive reader of Plato saw himself compelled to draw one of two conclusions: when he wrote the *Protagoras*, Plato "had not yet made up his mind on the topics treated in the dialogue, or *he did not think this a proper place for unfolding them.*" (Mill (a) 43. My italics).

[6] One would like to know what the truth is behind Aristoxenus' tantalizing report (*VS* 80A5) that the general purport of Plato's *Republic* had been anticipated by Protagoras in his *Antilogika*. The quotation from the Phaedo (p. 177-8 of this volume) may contain part of the answer to the question.

so as to remedy the disastrous consequences of "help your friends, harm your enemies."

The following owes much to Kahn's *Plato and the Socratic dialogue*. Unlike many other interpreters of the *Protagoras*, he squarely confronts the challenge it represents to his interpretation of the aporetic dialogues. Yet, his treatment of the dialogue, though in many ways illuminating, seems to be not completely successful for two interconnected reasons: it does not seek to account for Socrates' peculiar way of conducting the conversation, and, more importantly, it fails to explain the precise purpose of "a number of signposts carefully placed in the text, in such a way that they seem designed to alert the reader that Socrates is engaged in an elaborate set of *tactical* (my italics) moves, so that not everything he says can be taken at face value." (241) I agree with Kahn that these hints are meant to convey to the reader "that much of Socrates' reasoning here is manipulative and insincere" (242), and will myself add a couple of signposts to his catalogue. Yet Kahn's answer to the question "why has Plato made Socrates seem so perverse?" is not convincing.[7] If, as he has it, Socrates' quasi-commitment to unqualified hedonism and to a simplistic rationalist decision theory is "a device contrived for presenting the paradox" that "deliberately bad actions are always motivated by a false view of the good" (242), then what "strategic advantage" was to be gained by making Socrates defend the Socratic paradox in its less controversial, "prudential form" (247), instead of introducing in his conversation with Protagoras the stronger, moral form that is outlined in the preliminary conversation with Hippocrates?[8]

I will argue that, if Kahn's treatment of the *Protagoras* leaves something to be desired, this may be due to the fact that the main purpose of his argument has made him neglect the possibility that Plato's motivation for writing the dialogue was that he wanted to refute the claims of Protagoras rather than to offer a piece of constructive philosophy. Moreover, Kahn (1) seems to share Plato's negative verdict on Protagoras – as may be gathered from his characterizing Protagoras' groundbreaking views on justice and temperance as "conventional" (216) and Protagoras' notion of virtue as "lacking the moral depth of the Socratic notion of psychic health" (217); (2) apparently subscribes to Plato's view on Greek society in the fifth and fourth centuries BC.,

---

[7] Cf. Kahn's treatment of Socrates' conversation with Polus in the *Gorgias*, where he provides a precise answer to the same question (248) .

[8] At many places of his argument, Kahn leaves it at observing that Socrates does, says &c. something, without offering an explanation of the purposes Plato had with the conversational moves in question. Cf., for instance, 214: "Socrates is unwilling here to challenge directly Protagoras' assumption"; 215: "this conception is kept in the background here"; 218: "this potential conflict is carefully avoided in the *Protagoras*"; 226: "these arguments are not allowed to reach their conclusion."

witness his regarding "the world we know from Attic tragedy and comedy, from the history of Thucydides and the pleading of the orators" as "a world of petty pride, heroic passion, ordinary lust and greed, unlimited ambition and utter ruthlessness." (67) It would seem to me that a successful interpretation of the *Protagoras* depends both on applying to the 'sophist' the principle of charity and on being constantly aware of the possibility that Plato had an axe to grind. Precisely the high quality of the dialogue as a piece of literature should make us think twice before we conclude that Plato just wanted to display his virtuosity as a writer.

2. *Preliminary conversation: the need for a 'doctor of the soul'*

Socrates' conversation with Protagoras is preceded by an unusually long introduction that seems designed to make the reader aware of the doubtful credentials of the man who will be Socrates' conversation partner. In his preliminary conversation with Hippocrates (312b7-314c2), Socrates warns his young friend against entrusting his soul to a sophist without being able to tell 'what a sophist is'.[9] He compares the sophist to a merchant of food, who himself does not know whether the stuff he sells is beneficial or harmful, and whose customers need a professional trainer or a doctor in order to find out what to buy and what not. In the same way Hippocrates needs a 'doctor of the soul' in order to assess the quality of what the 'salesman of groceries for the soul' has on offer.

As has been observed by Kahn (215), the passage is "a kind of signal to the reader on Plato's part, as it were over the head of Socrates' interlocutor": the reader is to be cautioned for misinterpreting the absence from the conversation with Protagoras himself of any direct reference to the "Socratic-Platonic conception of virtue as psychic health." There is, however, also a more specific point, as becomes clear when we compare Protagoras' 'self-defence' in the *Theaetetus*: Socrates' warning to Hippocrates implicitly takes issue with Protagoras' presumption that one can act as a doctor or as a teacher without claiming to know whether what one says is true or false: "When a man's soul is in a pernicious state, he judges things akin to it, but giving him a sound state of the soul causes him to think different things, things that are good. In the latter event, the things which appear to him are what some people, from lack of experience, call true; my position, however, is that the one kind are better than

[9] It may be relevant to note that, many years later, Plato devoted a whole dialogue to this seemingly simple question.

the others, but in no way truer." (*Tht.* 167b1-4) This is, of course, in sharp contrast with Plato's own conviction that prima facie goods are beneficial only under the leadership of knowledge and wisdom – which makes it all the more necessary to test Hippocrates' description of Protagoras as one who is τῶν σοφῶν ἐπιστήμων (312c5).

3. *The rules of the game*

At the start of his conversation with Socrates, Protagoras professes that he will make his pupils "better men" and as a result of his teaching they will learn "sound deliberation (εὐβουλία), both in domestic matters (how best to manage one's household?), and in public affairs (how to become most capable in speaking and acting in the city's affairs?)." He has no problem with Socrates' summing him up as one promising to make them into good citizens by teaching them πολιτικὴ τέχνη (318a8–319a5).[10]

> It should be noted that Protagoras' description of what Hippocrates will learn from him differs from the young man's own expectations. Hippocrates, as he is summed up by Socrates, is a gifted member of a distinguished family and wants to become a prominent citizen (ἐλλόγιμος ἐν τῇ πόλει). According to Kahn (216-7), the discussion "thus opens with an ambiguity between the ordinary virtue of citizens and the extraordinary talent of outstanding political leaders", between an "egalitarian" and an "elitist" concept of political virtue. It should, however, be observed that Protagoras' description has nothing ambiguous about it: he consistently maintains a concept of virtue that is both more egalitarian and more cooperative than what Hippocrates has implied, or, for instance, what Meno understands by a man's ἀρετή: "managing the city's affairs capably, and so that he will help his friends and harm his enemies while taking care to come to no harm himself." (*Meno* 71e1-5) There is, then, no reason to observe (with Kahn 218) that the tension "between a civic and cooperative conception of *aretê* and the more ambitious and competitive view" of Callicles and Thrasymachus is "carefully avoided in the *Protagoras*": the issue is absent from the *Protagoras* because the con-

[10] It is significant that Socrates is the one who (319a4 & 8) introduces the term τέχνη, whereas Protagoras himself prefers to speak about (πολιτικὴ) ἀρετή, and explicitly stresses the difference between his own teaching and that of his 'fellow sophists', who "maltreat their pupils by steering them back again, against their will, into the τέχναι they have escaped from at school" (318d9-e2; cf. also the Myth, where αἰδώς and δίκη do not belong to the same domain as ἔντεχνος σοφία). By thus making Protagoras himself avoid the term τέχνη not for any intrinsic reason, but just because he wants to distinguish himself from his rival 'sophists', Socrates avails himself of the right to use ἀρετή and τέχνη as if they were interchangeable.

> versation partners agree on the benefits of social cooperation for a peaceful life. What keeps them divided is that, in Protagoras' view, the difference between a good citizen and a great statesman is at most a matter of degree: to him, (327a1-2), civic virtue is something in which there must be no laymen (οὐδένα δεῖ ἰδιωτεύειν), if there is to be a city at all – whereas, from Plato's perspective, the rational understanding that is needed for directing the city is a philosopher's prerogative. So to Plato, the cooperative virtues are a necessary, but definitely not a sufficient condition for creating what he considers a well-governed society.

Socrates proceeds to point out that he, for his part, does not believe that Protagoras' subject is something that can be taught, and explains himself by reminding Protagoras of the practice of the Athenians:[11] they, apparently, do not regard it as teachable (319a10-320c1), since they carefully distinguish it from matters they consider 'technical' (ἐν τέχνῃ). "If then you can demonstrate more plainly to us that virtue is something that can be taught, please don't begrudge us your explanation." (320b8-c1)

This is exactly the question put by Meno in the dialogue that bears his name (70a1), where Socrates first refuses any attempt to answer it: "how can I know a property of something when I don't even know what it is?" (*Men.* 71b3: ὃ δὲ μὴ οἶδα τί ἐστιν, πῶς ἂν ὁποῖόν γέ τι εἰδείην;) It is with the aim to find an answer to this question that, later on (*Meno* 86eff.), Socrates allows himself to make use of a 'hypothesis':[12] "what attribute of the soul must virtue be, *if it is teachable?*" In the *Protagoras*, however, he not only completely disregards the need for a definition of terms as an indispensable preliminary to discussing a controversial topic,[13] but even invites Protagoras to substantiate his belief that virtue can be taught. He leaves him free to do so in the form of a story or as a reasoned argument, and allows him to go into a long monologue: a remarkable contrast with other conversations, where attempts to make long speeches are cut off immediately.[14]

---

[11] The role of the Athenians is comparable to that of the Many later on in the dialogue: Protagoras is made to explain to a majority why he is right and they are wrong. See p. 197 below.

[12] For the wider significance of this methodic strategy, see the references in Kahn's Subject Index.

[13] For this kind of request for a definition see Kahn 1996, 93-4.

[14] At *Prot.* 336b8-c2, Alcibiades manages to get the conversation started again by pointing out that he would be surprised if Protagoras "yielded to anyone [Socrates himself included] in ability to converse (διαλέγεσθαι) and in knowing how to give and receive a rational account." Cf. Diogenes Laertius' report (*VS* 80A1, 25) that Protagoras was the first one to propound an argument by means of a series of questions (συνηρώτα).

3.1. When Protagoras has finished his speech, Socrates asks a further question about virtue: "is it a single whole, and are *δικαιοσύνη*, *σωφροσύνη* and *ὁσιότης* parts of it, or are these latter all names for one and the same thing (*ὀνόματα τοῦ αὐτοῦ ἑνὸς ὄντος*)?" (329c6-d1).[15] It should be noted that Socrates' posing "the only problem that still worries him" in terms of "the relationship between name and nominatum"[16] leaves Protagoras free to believe that the conversation will be about *ὀρθότης ὀνομάτων* – which is the more remarkable when we remember Plato's diffidence of 'names' ("there is no reason why what we call 'circles' might not be called 'straight lines' and vice versa, and their natures will be none the less fixed despite this exchange of names") and his conviction that testing the correctness of 'names' boils down to testing a defective instrument rather than the mind of the speaker (*Seventh Letter* 344b1ff.).

As Socrates observes at 329c4-6, *δικαιοσύνη*, *σωφροσύνη* and *ὁσιότης* have been cited by Protagoras himself – both in the Myth and in the argument that follows it – as instances of virtue. *Ἀνδρεία* and *σοφία* only come up at 329e5-6, where Protagoras is arguing for his belief that having one part of *ἀρετή* does not imply that one has all its parts, since "many are courageous, but unjust, and many again just, but not wise." By thus adding both *ἀνδρεία* and *σοφία* to the 'triad' *δικαιοσύνη*, *σωφροσύνη* and *ὁσιότης*, Protagoras provides Socrates with the opportunity to complete his argument against him, and thereby digs his own grave.[17]

Before embarking upon his argument that "justice is pious and piety just" Socrates, when summarizing Protagoras' position, almost imperceptibly substitutes *ἐπιστήμη* for *σοφία*: "Then, none of the other parts of virtue is like knowledge (*ἐπιστήμη*), or like justice, or like temperance, or like piety?" (330b4-6). According to the rules of eristic conversation, by endorsing this summary of the position he will have

---

[15] For the second alternative cf. Plut. *De virt. mor.* 440E: Μενέδημος ὁ ἐξ Ἐρετρίας *ἀνῄρει τῶν ἀρετῶν καὶ τὸ πλῆθος καὶ τὰς διαφοράς, ὡς μιᾶς οὔσης καὶ χρωμένης πολλοῖς ὀνόμασι· τὸ γὰρ αὐτὸ σωφροσύνην καὶ ἀνδρείαν καὶ δικαιοσύνην λέγεσθαι, καθάπερ βροτὸν καὶ ἄνθρωπον*, and Diogenes Laertius II.106 *οὗτος* (sc. Eucleides) *ἓν τὸ ἀγαθὸν ἀπεφαίνετο, πολλοῖς ὀνόμασι καλούμενον· ὁτὲ μὲν γὰρ φρόνησιν, ὁτὲ δὲ θεόν, καὶ ἄλλοτε νοῦν καὶ τὰ λοιπά.*

[16] Kahn 1996, 219.

[17] There is little point in saying, with Vlastos (1956, xi, note 15), that "Socrates is unnecessarily fussy, for Protagoras never said that the first triad are the only virtues." Cf. *Gorgias* 507a-c, where *σοφία* is absent from the list of virtues, and Kahn's observations (p. 133) on the way the characterization of *aretê* in terms of knowledge makes what may be its first appearance in the *Laches*.

to defend, Protagoras legitimizes both Socrates' operating with five, instead of the usual four, virtues, and his equating, now and then (as, for instance, at 352d1–2), *σοφία* and *ἐπιστήμη*. It is, however, open to serious doubt whether the historical Protagoras (a) would have subscribed to the equation of *σοφία* and *ἐπιστήμη*,[18] and (b) would have agreed to regard *σοφία* – let alone *ἐπιστήμη* – as an integrating part of (*πολιτικὴ*) *ἀρετή*. It should be noted that the latter is, strictly speaking, incompatible with the role he assigns to *σοφία* in the Myth: there, (*ἔντεχνος*) *σοφία* stands for the technical ability that is necessary for individual sustenance, and *ἀρετή* refers to the moral qualities that are indispensable for social and political life.

Moreover, one may doubt whether *ἀνδρεία* was a prominent feature of Protagoras' concept of *πολιτικὴ ἀρετή*: after all, courage is needed for defending a community against its common enemies rather than for what, according to the Myth, is the function of *αἰδώς* and *δίκη*: to unite the citizens by bonds of *φιλία* (322c2). This is confirmed by the fact that Protagoras, when asked by Socrates to repeat his view of the virtues, replies that most of them are quite alike, but that courage is very different, since a man can be outstandingly brave yet utterly unjust, impious, licentious and stupid (349d2-8: *εὑρήσεις γὰρ πολλοὺς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀδικωτάτους μὲν ὄντας καὶ ἀνοσιωτάτους καὶ ἀκολαστοτάτους καὶ ἀμαθεστάτους, ἀνδρειοτάτους δὲ διαφερόντως*).[19]

The conclusion has to be that we cannot exclude the possibility that Plato based Socrates' argument upon assumptions Protagoras himself would have refused to accept. Plato may have thought that these assumptions were implied by what he read in Protagoras' own writings, and/or may have assumed that a *σοφιστής*, who cared for his reputation, would hardly have been prepared to deny that *σοφία* is an instance of *ἀρετή* (cf. 352c8-d2), or to contradict the common Greek view that *ἀνδρεία* is an important 'part' of civic *ἀρετή*.

3.2. From 330b onwards, the conversation is conducted in such a way that, at the end of the dialogue, Protagoras still believes that

---

[18] Even if Kahn (133) were right in assuming that "in Plato's vocabulary the words for art, knowledge and wisdom (*technê, epistêmê, sophia*) are used interchangeably", this doesn't imply that Protagoras likewise was indifferent to substituting the one for the other.

[19] It seems to be relevant that, for Plato also, *ἀνδρεία* is different from the other 'civic virtues' in that a society needs courageous men for defending its citizens against an external enemy. Next to this, there is another, as it were 'internal' manifestation of *ἀνδρεία* as a feature of the self-controlled man who courageously wages war on those elements within himself which may seduce him to disregard the rule of reason.

Socrates was motivated all the time by the desire to win an eristic contest (360e2: *φιλονικεῖν μοι, ἔφη, δοκεῖς ὦ Σώκρατες, τὸ ἐμὲ εἶναι τὸν ἀποκρινόμενον*). The need to clarify a subject observed to be in a state of confusion is felt only by Socrates: he describes himself as "trying to show that everything is knowledge – justice, temperance and courage alike" (361b1-2: *ὡς πάντα χρήματα ἐστιν ἐπιστήμη*) and declares that he would like "to follow up the present talk with a determined attack on the nature of virtue itself" (*ἐπὶ τὴν ἀρετὴν ὅ τι ἐστι*) and then "to return to the question of whether or not it can be taught" (361c4–5).[20] So, unlike in other dialogues, the question that must precede all other questions, surprisingly, only comes up when the conversation is over.

It will not do to observe with Kahn (212) that "the substance of this question is present throughout, in the discussion of teachability, in the topic of unity, and even in the discussion of Simonides' poem." This may have been so for Plato's readership – who have been forwarned by Socrates' conversation with Hippocrates – but the question to be answered is what reason Plato had for making the *Protagoras* the one and only 'aporetic' dialogue where Socrates' conversation partner is exempted from even the weakest form of the Socratic "rule of good method": that one has to agree on a definition of the subject of conversation before discussing it. To put the question in Kahn's terms (178-9): why is it that the *Protagoras* has to offer no contribution whatsoever to the "cumulative lesson on the logic of definition" the reader is to learn from the *Laches*, *Euthyphro* and *Meno*? The question becomes the more pressing when we observe that, when the need for a definition finally comes up, the wording (360e8: *τί ποτ' ἐστὶν αὐτό, ἡ ἀρετή;* cf. 361c5: *τὴν ἀρετὴν ὅ τι ἐστι*) seems to suggest what Kahn (161) has rightly termed the strong version of "epistemic priority."

So there seems to be a kind of reversal of roles: this time, Socrates himself turns out to be the only one who is perplexed by the outcome of the conversation. Protagoras, on his part, congratulates Socrates on his enthusiasm and on his finding himself a way through argumentations (361d7-e6).[21] He declares himself to be the last man to be jealous: he would not be surprised if Socrates "became one of those who are distinguished for their wisdom." By this he is characterized as a good loser, but his willingness to have another conversation is as

[20] This is, of course, exactly what happens in the *Meno*.

[21] *διέξοδον τῶν λόγων*: my rendering seeks to bring out that the expression connotes Socrates' having managed to 'make his escape' (cf., for instance, *Rep.* 405c2).

polite as, from a Socratic point of view, it is meaningless: it does not come of its own accord, and he does not understand why, to Socrates, further inquiry into the matter is *necessary*. The reader cannot but observe that, by withholding the fundamental question until the conversation is over, Socrates has done little or nothing to assist Protagoras in acquiring a "desire for knowledge that he did not have before" (*Meno* 84b-c).

All in all, this seems a far cry from Socrates' usual way of exercising his art of 'spiritual midwifery' (*Tht.* 150c1ff.). But, perhaps, we have to bear in mind that, as Socrates has it in his conversation with Callicles, the ideal conversation partner must possess three qualifications (...): knowledge (ἐπιστήμη), good will (εὔνοια) and frankness (παρρησία)" (*Gorg.* 487a1–3).[22] It seems probable that Socrates' breaking his own rules of conversation originates with Plato's conviction that Protagoras did not answer this description: he is afraid that, by speaking his mind, he may damage his reputation, he is uncooperative because he is bent on winning the 'contest', and – most important of all – he is not among those who, as Plato put it in the *Sophist* (230d1-3), have to learn that "they know only what they know, and no more," since he professes to be 'wise' without laying any claim to knowledge and truth.[23] So, if Socrates felt compelled to interview ἅπαντας τοὺς τι δοκοῦντας εἰδέναι[24] (*Ap.* 21e6-22a1) with the aim to test their claims to wisdom in a given subject, how should he proceed with Protagoras?

4. *Two kinds of* ὀρθῶς λέγειν

After his first, abortive attempt to prove that 'courage' is just another name for 'wisdom', Socrates resumes the argument by asking Protagoras (351c1) whether he thinks that "to live pleasurably is good, to live painfully bad." Protagoras replies that he is not sure whether he should give an answer as unqualified as the question suggests: "but with a view not only to my present answer but to the whole of the

---

[22] Cf. *Meno* 75d5-7: ἔστι δὲ ἴσως τὸ διαλεκτικώτερον μὴ μόνον τἀληθῆ ἀποκρίνεσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ δι' ἐκείνων ὧν ἂν προσομολογῇ εἰδέναι ὁ ἐρωτώμενος.

[23] Cf. the *Gorgias*, where (460a5 ff.) Gorgias' claiming knowledge of his subject matter is what gets him into trouble. So there seems to be more to it than that Protagoras "cannot be asked the 'What is the *F* question" because asking this question "would have pushed Socrates into the role of ontologist which he prefers to avoid." (Vlastos 1991, 61) Cf. also *Prot.* 361c5.

[24] The formula refers both to those 'who have a reputation for knowledge' and to those 'who themselves believe that they know something'.

rest of my life, I believe it is *safest* to reply that there are some pleasures which are not good, and some pains which are not evil, others on the other hand which are, and a third class which are neither evil nor good." (351d2-7) Somewhat to our surprise, Socrates, instead of pointing out that he is not seeking for what is safe but for what his conversation partner sincerely believes to be true, simply proceeds with his next question.

Later on, we see Socrates once more eliciting from Protagoras precisely the kind of answer which, on other occasions, he does not allow: does Protagoras agree with the majority of mankind that it is not the knowledge that a man possesses which governs him, but something else – now passion, then pain, sometimes love, and frequently fear? Or would he rather say that knowledge "is a fine thing, quite capable of ruling a man, and that if he can distinguish good from evil, nothing will force him to act otherwise than as knowledge dictates?" (352b2-c7) One remembers Polus answering the question in what craft Gorgias is expert by saying that it is "the finest of arts" and being called to order because he "praises the art as though someone were attacking it, but neglects to answer what it is." (*Gorg.* 448e3-4)

Protagoras answers Socrates' leading question by saying that "it would be an especial disgrace to him of all people not to maintain that wisdom and knowledge[25] are the mightiest of human things" (352d1-2). This answer works like a piece of dramatic irony: its content can get Socrates' (and Plato's) full support, yet it does not meet normal Socratic standards, since it is inspired by Protagoras' anxiety about his reputation. Nevertheless, Socrates declares himself satisfied: "well and truly said (*καλῶς γε σὺ λέγων καὶ ἀληθῆ*)." He adds that he expects Protagoras to know that most people do not share his opinion: *they* maintain that there are many who recognize the best but are unwilling to act on it because they are mastered by pleasure or pain (352d4-e2).

Protagoras replies that "it is by no means uncommon for people to speak in an incorrect way" (352e3: *πολλὰ γὰρ οἶμαι καὶ ἄλλα οὐκ ὀρθῶς λέγουσιν οἱ ἄνθρωποι*).[26] Together with Socrates' "well and truly said" this provides an important clue to the interpretation of the conversation: for Plato, there can be no essential difference between answering *well* (*καλῶς*) and answering *truly* (*ἀληθῶς*), whereas Protagoras

[25] *Σοφία* presumably owes its presence to the fact that Protagoras himself must have been reluctant, to say the least, to use *ἐπιστήμη* in this way.

[26] Taylor's translation ("people have many other wrong ideas too") completely misses the point.

can admit that a statement is expressed *correctly* (ὀρθῶς) or *well* without thereby implying that it is *true*. In Plato's view it is useless to ask Protagoras whether he judges a statement to be true or false for two interconnected reasons: (a) according to Plato's reading of Homo Mensura as we know it from the *Theaetetus*, for Protagoras all statements must be equally true, and, (b) consequently, he is always free to give the answer which suits him best.[27] Hence, with him, the standing rule of Socratic conversation that one must say only what one believes to be true cannot be adopted. Accordingly, the only time Plato makes Socrates allude to this rule is when Protagoras says that, as far as he is concerned, *Socrates himself* is free to say whatever he likes. Only then does Socrates tell him that "it isn't this 'if you like' and 'if that is what you think' that I want to examine, but you and me ourselves. What I mean is, I think the argument will be most fairly tested if one (τις) takes the 'if' out of it" (331c4-d1).

It seems, then, that taking some current expression and asking whether it is to be judged an ὀρθῶς λεγόμενον was the most effective (and perhaps even the only viable) way Plato, when he wrote the *Protagoras*, saw for making Protagoras discuss any view at all: if it is impossible to discuss with him the 'truth' of a λόγος, we will have to adopt his own standards, and make him discuss its 'correctness' (ὀρθότης, ὀρθοέπεια). This may well have been Plato's reason for making a question of 'naming' the subject of the whole conversation.

4.1. This, apparently, also is why Plato has devoted a sizeable part of the dialogue to testing the correctness (339a2: ἅ τε ὀρθῶς πεποίηται καὶ ἃ μή) of a poem by Simonides. When the preliminary skirmishes (338e6-341d8) are over,[28] it turns out that, in order to make sense of

---

[27] Cf. the passage quoted in note 34 below.

[28] These skirmishes are less innocent and 'playful' than some scholars take them to be: (1) Socrates' reaction to Protagoras' demonstration (he feels as if he has been hit by a good boxer) is clearly meant to convey Plato's contempt for Protagoras' Ἀλήθεια ἢ Καταβάλλοντες ("Overthrowing arguments"), and (2) Socrates' attempt to save Simonides from Protagoras' criticism makes it clear that, if we accept the kind of critical procedure advocated by Protagoras, we are in fact making a pedant *à la* Prodicus out of an inspired poet. Together with Socrates' own (far from playful) reading of the poem, this seems intended to alert the reader to the risks that go with analysing language instead of content. Cf. what Plato, in the *Seventh Letter* (342e2 ff.), has to say about τὸ τῶν λόγων ἀσθενές, and about the habit of looking for truth where it is not to be found being the result of πονηρὰ τροφή (*ib.* 343c5-7). If, in his Ἀλήθεια, Protagoras committed his serious thoughts to writing, it can only be "because men, not the gods, have taken his wits away." (*ib.* 344c8-d2)

Simonides' poem, we have to assume that its author, who has been characterized as a sophist *avant la lettre* (316d7), intended to deny the possibility of doing evil voluntarily (345e1).

I would not be prepared to agree with Taylor (xiii) that the "principal point of the episode is to exhibit the unreliability of interpretations of literary texts," in order to show that "a method such as that of Protagoras, which accorded a central role to interpretation of this kind (338e-339a), must forfeit its claim to reliability in the acquisition of knowledge."[29] As far as I can see, from 343c7 onwards, the episode must be read against the background of what is said by Socrates in the *Apology* (22c) about poets, seers and prophets "who deliver their sublime messages without knowing in the least what they mean":[30] even if Simonides was inspired by the gods, he may well have garbled the message he was to convey. Therefore, sticking to the letter of the text is pointless: as Socrates' first reading of the text has shown, Simonides' poem may well be 'correct' or 'incorrect' by the standards of *ὀρθότης ὀνομάτων*, but it is surely incorrect when we judge it by the standard of truth. So, if one wants to defend its author against Protagoras' reproach of having spoken 'incorrectly' there is no sense in scrutinizing what the text itself says: one has to concentrate on discovering the *διάνοια*[31] of the author (c.q. of his source of inspiration). The wise Simonides cannot have been so uneducated (345d7: *ἀπαίδευτος*) as to suppose that people willingly do evil things. So, when he says "all who do no baseness willingly I praise and cherish", we will have to disregard the rules of grammar and to take "willingly" with "I praise and cherish". What Socrates wants to convey is definitely not, as Taylor has it, that "any interpretation goes"; nor is he, as Vlastos[32] has it, merely putting on an act, in order to show that "the debate on what Simonides did, or didn't mean, has been an exercise

---

[29] Cf. Adam xxvii: "The exaggerated perversity of his [Socrates'] exposition is doubtless intended as a satire on the epideictic displays in vogue among some of the Sophists."

[30] Cf. *Meno* 99c4: *ἐνθουσιῶντες λέγουσιν μὲν ἀληθῆ καὶ πολλά, ἴσασι δὲ οὐδὲν ὧν λέγουσιν.*

[31] See 341e8: *ἅ μοι δοκεῖ διανοεῖσθαι Σιμωνίδης*, and 347a3–4: *ταῦτά μοι δοκεῖ* (...) *Σιμωνίδης διανοούμενος πεποιηκέναι τοῦτο τὸ ᾆσμα.* Cf. Diogenes (IX.52), where it is stated that Protagoras *τὴν διάνοιαν ἀφεὶς πρὸς τοὔνομα διελέχθη*. We have, of course, no means to decide whether Diogenes (or his source) was inspired by the *Protagoras* or by some written statement of Protagoras himself.

[32] 1991, 137. Cf. Guthrie IV, 227: "it is splendid entertainment, but hardly philosophy."

in triviality": he is showing that, understanding a text written by an author who is to be taken seriously requires, to put it in Gadamer's terminology, "Einverständnis in der Sache": according to Socrates, nothing can be considered to be *ὀρθῶς λεγόμενον* that does not meet the standard of truth.[33]

5. *The competence of a teacher who is believed by nobody*

Socrates' reason for wanting to examine the expression "to be mastered by pleasure" is his observation that those who use it seem to believe that what rules man is "not knowledge, but rather something else – sometimes desire, sometimes pleasure, sometimes pain, at other times love, often fear." They do not share his own and Protagoras' conviction that "wisdom and knowledge are the most powerful elements in human life." (352d2-3)

So, in order to save his belief that "to be mastered by pleasure" must be a case of *οὐκ ὀρθῶς λέγειν*, Protagoras is made to investigate the opinion of *οἱ πολλοί*, who, as he has it, "will say whatever occurs to them" (353a7-8). As a result of this investigation, agreement is reached, not about something Protagoras and/or Socrates themselves believe, but about what the Many would have to answer to the questions they are being asked: Protagoras has only to approve the questions to be asked and to agree that the Many would be willing to endorse the answers Socrates makes them give.[34]

As was to be expected, the expression "mastered by pleasure" is found to be an *οὐκ ὀρθῶς λεγόμενον* – the correct expression turning out to be "mastered by ignorance" (357c6-e2).[35] This implies that we have to introduce some as yet unspecified art or branch of knowledge, which Socrates provisionally – with a pointed reference both to *πάντων μέτρον* and to Protagoras' claim to expertise in the field of *πολιτικὴ τέχνη* – calls a *μετρητικὴ τέχνη* (357b4).

---

[33] Taylor (148) anachronistically makes Plato into a kind of forerunner of the *Altertumswissenschaft* by making him point out a fault in the methods of interpretation which he judged characteristic of the sophists, by representing "Socrates as wrenching the poem *from its historical context*" (emphasis added). Cf. Gundert 1952.

[34] Cf. also 333c6-9: *οὐδέν μοι διαφέρει, ἐὰν μόνον σύ γε ἀποκρίνῃ, εἴτ' οὖν δοκεῖ σοι ταῦτα* (sc. what the *πολλοί* believe) *εἴτε μή· τὸν γὰρ λόγον ἔγωγε μάλιστα ἐξετάζω, συμβαίνει μέντοι ἴσως καὶ ἐμὲ τὸν ἐρωτῶντα καὶ τὸν ἀποκρινόμενον ἐξετάζεσθαι.*

[35] Cf. *Leg.* 863c1ff.: "Most of us agree that some people are 'conquerors of' their desire for pleasure and feelings of anger, while others are 'conquered by' them. And that is in fact the situation (*ἔχει ταύτῃ*)" (transl. Saunders). For a discussion of "Pleasure and the Good Life" in the *Laws* see Stalley 59 ff.

5.1. When he has finished the investigation, Socrates once more proceeds in a highly unusual way. Normally, he is only interested in the wholehearted assent of the one man with whom he is conversing: "I know how to secure one man's vote, but with the many I will not even enter into discussion" (*Gorg.* 474a5-b1), since, as he puts it in the *Laches*: "a good decision is based on knowledge and not on counting votes" (184e8-9: *ἐπιστήμῃ γὰρ οἶμαι δεῖ κρίνεσθαι ἀλλ' οὐ πλήθει τὸ μέλλον καλῶς κριθήσεσθαι*). In this case, however, after having finished the interrogation of the Many, Socrates (358a3) asks the other members of the company for their support: do *they* think that what he is saying is true or false? After having cashed in the agreement of Protagoras' 'colleagues' Prodicus and Hippias he states (359a2–3) that, on this basis (*οὕτω δὴ τούτων ὑποκειμένων*), Protagoras will have to defend the correctness (*πῶς ὀρθῶς ἔχει*) of what he said earlier in the conversation: that courage is altogether different from the other virtues.[36]

In order to understand the significance of Socrates' unusual way of proceeding it is once more helpful to consult the *Theaetetus*. There (171a1-3) Socrates points out that, if the Many do not share Protagoras' view, then he must admit that it is more false than true "by just so much as the unbelievers outnumber the believers." I would suggest that this provides the explanation of the anomalous characteristics of Socrates' strategy in the *Protagoras*: instead of making Protagoras *himself* concede that one cannot lay a claim to being a teacher of *ἀρετή* and, at the same time, maintain that all beliefs are true for the person whose beliefs they are, he is collecting as many disbelievers of Protagoras' beliefs as he can: neither the Athenians nor Socrates himself share his belief that *πολιτικὴ ἀρετή* can be taught, and both the Many and Protagoras' fellow sophists disagree with the implications of Homo Mensura, since they subscribe to the thesis that "to give in to oneself is nothing other than error, and to control oneself nothing other than wisdom."[37] In the 'Intermezzo', Socrates has availed himself of the authority of Simonides for the tenet that "acting badly is nothing other than being deprived of knowledge", and that "no wise

[36] Plato is laying it on thickly: at 316b3-4 ff., Protagoras himself welcomes the suggestion of answering Socrates' questions in the presence of everyone in the house – because, as Socrates has it, he wanted to show off in front of Prodicus and Hippias. So the implication seems to be that his vanity costs him dearly.

[37] For the reasons Plato may have had for making Socrates neglect the facts of human psychology, see Kahn's discussion (224 ff.) of the relevant passages.

man (*οὐδεὶς τῶν σοφῶν ἀνδρῶν*) thinks that anyone acts wrongly of his own free will." (345d9-e2)

5.2. Up to 359a2, Socrates has made no attempt to make Protagoras himself agree to any of these statements. Only in the concluding part of the conversation is a reluctant Protagoras made to admit that one cannot 'correctly' (*ὀρθῶς*) call somebody ignorant and courageous at the same time. Even now, Plato has carefully phrased Socrates' question in such a way that Protagoras is not asked to give up his belief that courage is altogether different from the other virtues: he is only asked to defend the correctness (*πῶς ὀρθῶς ἔχει*) of his earlier answer. When Socrates is about to conclude that courage is "wisdom about what is and is not to be feared" (360d4 ff.), Protagoras only nods his agreement and, finally, "he could no longer bring himself to assent, but was silent." When Socrates urges him to *affirm* (*φῇς*) or to *deny* (*ἀπόφῃς*) what he is being asked,[38] Protagoras invites him to finish the argument on his own.[39] His reply to Socrates' very last question seems to reflect Plato's intention to make it clear that Protagoras' acknowledging that he has lost the argument does not imply that he subscribes to its conclusion: "I see that you are eager that I should be the one who answers.[40] So I'll oblige you, and say that on the agreed assumptions it seems to me impossible." (*ἐκ τῶν ὡμολογημένων ἀδύνατόν μοι δοκεῖ εἶναι*). It is relevant to note that the premises upon which Socrates has based his argument have been granted by the other members of the company (359a2: *οὕτω δὴ τούτων ὑποκειμένων*) rather than by Protagoras himself.

5.3. It will by now have become clear that the principal conclusion Plato wanted the reader to draw from Socrates' argument is a negative one: Protagoras' position on the subject of truth and knowledge is not compatible with his promise to teach political virtue. If the Athenians, his fellow sophists Simonides, Prodicus and Hippias and the Many, all of them, deny him their support, "the unbelievers will

---

[38] For the significance of Protagoras' refusal to *affirm* or to *deny*, see p. 170-1 of this volume.

[39] In some respects, the situation is comparable to the final stage of the conversation with Callicles in the *Gorgias*, the important difference being, of course, that, there, Socrates is made to give expression to his deepest convictions in the Myth.

[40] *Φιλονικεῖν μοι, ἔφη, δοκεῖς τὸ ἐμὲ εἶναι τὸν ἀποκρινόμενον.* Cf. *Pol.* 338a7: *προσεποιεῖτο δὲ φιλονικεῖν πρὸς τὸ ἐμὲ εἶναι τὸν ἀποκρινόμενον*, and *Gorg.* 457e4-5: *φοβοῦμαι διελέγχειν σε, μή με ὑπολάβῃς οὐ πρὸς τὸ πρᾶγμα φιλονικοῦντα λέγειν τοῦ καταφανὲς γενέσθαι, ἀλλὰ πρὸς σέ.*

outnumber the believers," and Protagoras runs the risk of being the only one to believe what he is saying. This makes the amount of truth he may claim for himself definitely too small to entitle him to act as a teacher of whatever subject.

When we attempt to read the dialogue as an 'elenchus', the conclusion has to be that it is neither a testing of persons nor a testing of propositions.[41] As to the former: if the dialogue reveals the incompatibility of Protagoras' life and doctrine, it does so to the reader, *not* to Protagoras himself, who is permitted to take leave of the company without having acknowledged that his life as a professional teacher has been shown not to agree with his avowed principles. There is indeed a number of unmistakable references to Homo Mensura, but they are clearly meant for the reader: nowhere in the conversation is Protagoras himself asked to defend the compatibility of the thesis with his activity as a teacher.

As to the testing of propositions: in a formal sense, Protagoras has agreed to defend the thesis that the individual virtues are wholly unlike one another. Uncharacteristically, however, the thesis to be defended is not introduced as a belief he himself has to offer, but is forced upon him by Socrates, who – as Kahn (220) rightly observes – "impales him upon the horns of a spurious dilemma": "either the virtues must be wholly unlike one another, or they will be indistinguishable." This leaves us with the curious situation of two conversation partners neither of whom seriously wants to maintain the thesis under discussion. Protagoras is made to opt for the position that will give him the best chance of holding his own in what he sees as an eristic contest. Moreover, in the crucial phase of the discussion, he is not asked whether he himself is ready to accept the consequences of his position – apparently because Plato's intention was not to test the proposition that is the starting point of the conversation, but rather to show that it is possible to refute Protagoras' claims to be a teacher without having to undertake the difficult task of making him commit himself to the falsity of his belief that nothing can said to be true *simpliciter*.[42] The conclusion that Protagoras is unable to provide a rational basis for what deserves to be called a moral life is left to the reader.

---

[41] For the distinction see Kahn 97-8.

[42] The *Theaetetus* represents Plato's attempt to attack the problem the *Protagoras* has left unsolved.

6. *Unqualified 'hedonism'?*

In the course of the scrutiny of the expression "being mastered by pleasure" it is shown to the Many that a correct choice between several quantities requires a technique of measurement (356c4 ff.). In order to make this clear Socrates ('together with' Protagoras) argues that, generally, "if it is important to give a correct answer to the question 'is *x* bigger than *y*?' ordinary observation of whether *x* looks bigger than *y* must be superseded by a technique of measurement which provides answers independent of variations in the observation conditions."[43] Instead of putting this in general terms he argues from a specific example: "Suppose that saving our life (ἡ σωτηρία τοῦ βίου)[44] depended on a correct choice of odd and even (...) what would save our lives? Knowledge, surely. And surely some sort of measurement" (356e5ff.). In applying what we have learnt from the example, Socrates, surprisingly, does not return to the question that gave rise to it, but at once incorporates into his conclusion a modified form of the example he has given: "Since we have seen that *the σωτηρία τοῦ βίου depends on a correct choice of pleasure and pain* (...) doesn't it seem that the thing that saves our lives is some technique of measurement? (...) And since it is measurement, then necessarily it is some special art or branch of knowledge." (357a5-b4)

This piece of highhanded reasoning at the very end of the discussion with the Many makes it possible to determine the relevance of 'hedonism' for a discussion of the unity of virtue. It is there, not because either Socrates or Protagoras considered hedonism to be a serious option[45] but because the Many may reasonably be supposed

---

[43] The summary is quoted from Taylor 191.

[44] Socrates is, of course, referring to the Myth, where the survival of the species (σωτηρία τοῦ γένους) has been made dependent upon the ability of the members of a community to maintain a minimum of αἰδώς and δίκη. Vlastos' warning (301) that "we should be on our guard against the lofty connotations of 'salvation' triggered by so translating (...) ἔσωσεν ('saved') at 356e1 and σωτηρία ('salvation') at 357 a6-7" seems beside the point. Σωτηρία as Socrates defines it is something very different from the mere preservation of life – Socrates being guided by what he sees as the health of the soul (313e2), Protagoras by the life of the individual and of the human species. We have only to compare Protagoras' myth (320e5, 321a1, 321b6, 321c9, 322b6) with Socrates' discussion with the Many (356d3, e1-2, 6, 8, 357a5-6, b4) in order to see that Plato intended to make this clear.

[45] *Contra* Guthrie IV, 233: "A logical outcome of the Sophists' teaching – though up to now they had been unaware of it – was a life according to the hedonistic calculus, the maximization of one's personal pleasure and satisfaction. Introduced as the

to agree with the equation of the pleasant and the good. This provides Socrates with an indirect way to make Protagoras explain to them that one cannot make the preservation of life the ultimate justification of moral conduct (as he himself has done in the Myth), and, at the same time, refuse to admit that one is in need of some form of knowledge.

6.1. The equation of living well or living badly with living a pleasant or an unpleasant life also supplies Socrates with a starting point for arguing that – just like holiness, justice and temperance – courage too is a form of knowledge. After having endeavoured to identify courage and knowledge by way of a cumbrous proof, against the validity of which Protagoras has protested (350c6-351b2), Socrates abruptly[46] makes a fresh start: does Protagoras think that "to live pleasurably is good, to live painfully bad?" (351b7-c1). Protagoras replies "Yes, provided that one's pleasure is in what is commendable" (351c1-2: *εἴπερ τοῖς καλοῖς γ', ἔφη, ζῴη ἡδόμενος*). By this proviso he ostensibly seeks to prevent the audience from blaming him for putting higher and lower kinds of pleasure on a par.[47] It may, however, be doubted whether Protagoras would have attached much importance to the distinction: for him, something is good in so far as it is useful (*Prot.* 333d9–334c2) – 'useful' (*ὠφέλιμον*) being that which contributes to health and well-being, both of the individual and of the community. Choosing something because of the pleasure one expects to derive from it is at the most imprudent but not, as such, disreputable. At any rate, the proviso is swept aside immediately.[48]

Socrates affects surprise: "What's this, Protagoras? Surely you don't follow the common opinion that some pleasures are bad and some pains good?" Protagoras' reply (quoted at the start of Section 4 above) reminds us of the *Gorgias* (499c7ff.): there it is Callicles who subscribes to the opinion that "some pleasures are better and others worse", and Socrates almost snatches the answer from his mouth in

opinion of the common man (who similarly has not realized that this is the logical outcome of his attitude), it is so presented that finally the Sophists agree it is their view too." For a summary of the main views on this subject see Guthrie IV, 231 f. and Sullivan 10 f. Cf. also the bibliography in Taylor 226.

[46] The abruptness of the transition at 351b2-3 is unparallelled in Plato. It may be due to Plato having changed his mind about the most effective way of completing Socrates' argument when he was writing the dialogue.

[47] Cf. Mill (b) 257–8: "Now such a theory of life excites in many minds, and among them in those of the most estimable in feeling and purpose, an inveterate dislike".

[48] For the question why it is there, see p. 204-5 below.

order to use it as a basis for further argument. With Protagoras, however, the very same answer seems designed to suggest that the 'sophist' scents danger and therefore keeps on the safe side. If, however, one skips the innuendo, his answer meets normal Socratic standards: he keeps saying the same things about the same subjects, and what he says is in harmony with the kind of life he is leading (cf. *Gorg.* 488b7, 491b8).

At the end of the interrogation of the Many (358a1 ff.), when asking the other members of the company whether *they* agree with the thesis that "what is pleasant is good, and what is painful bad", Socrates 'playfully' pretends that he wants to avoid a discussion with Prodicus about the niceties of 'synonymy': "for whether you call it pleasant (ἡδύ) or agreeable (τερπνόν) or delightful (χαρτόν), or on whichever basis or by whichever method you like to apply such names, give your answer according to the intent of my question" (πρὸς ὃ βούλομαι[49]). One remembers the *Gorgias*, where Socrates' insistence on being precise about words and their meaning provokes Callicles' irritation: "are you not ashamed to be captious about words at your age, considering it a godsend if one makes a slip in an expression?" (489b8-c1). Here, however, we see Socrates sweeping the consequences of substituting different words for 'pleasure' under the carpet.

In order to understand why he does so, we are to remember that, earlier in the conversation (337c1ff.), Prodicus – in a seemingly harmless context – has pointed out that we "derive enjoyment (εὐφραίνεσθαι) from learning and partaking in the intellectual activity of the mind alone", whereas pleasure (ἥδεσθαι) "arises from eating or other forms of physical indulgence". So Socrates' inviting the audience to disregard the precise wording of his question amounts to a *reservatio mentis*: it leaves him free to adhere to the distinction between profitable and harmful pleasures as we know it from the *Gorgias* (499d1 ff.) – or even to an interpretation of 'pleasurable' in the sense of the *Philebus*, where (63b1ff.) it is said that the true pleasure is the pleasure that accompanies knowledge: "Dear pleasures – *if that* (ἡδοναί) *is the name by which I should call you, or whatever it ought to be*[50] – would you not choose to live in company with all intelligence rather than apart from

[49] Cf. my discussion of the way Socrates deals with Simonides, p. 195-6 above.

[50] The parenthesis no doubt alludes to Socrates' 'playfully' asking exemption from Prodicus' verbal distinctions, and thereby supports the interpretation advocated above.

any?" This is in harmony with Prodicus' definition of 'enjoyment', but it is not what Hippias and Prodicus are given to understand.[51] We have to conclude that Plato has made Socrates discuss an unqualified version of hedonism, while at the same time signalling to the reader that Socrates himself does not believe what he says.[52]

It should be noted that, despite the fact that Protagoras refuses to follow his suggestion that 'pleasure is the good', Socrates nevertheless takes the 'hedonist hypothesis' in its unqualified form as the point of departure for his investigation: "what I intend to say is, insofar as things are pleasant, are they not to that extent good, leaving other consequences out of account" (351c4-5: *ἐγὼ γὰρ λέγω, καθ' ὃ ἡδέα ἐστίν, ἆρα κατὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἀγαθά, μὴ εἴ τι ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἀποβήσεται ἄλλο;* 351e2-3: *τὴν ἡδονὴν αὐτὴν ἐρωτῶν εἰ οὐκ ἀγαθόν ἐστιν*). In doing so he acts as if neither Protagoras' *caveat* (*εἴπερ τοῖς καλοῖς ζῴη ἡδόμενος*) nor his specification of it (some pleasures are good, some bad, some indifferent) reflect Protagoras' own belief, but originate with his wish to save his reputation as a sophist: the innuendo is that this is what motivates him to go along with the Many, who call some pleasant things bad and some painful things good. So, instead of blaming Protagoras for his lack of *παρρησία*, Socrates is investigating not what

[51] Cf. Sullivan 22: at 357a–b "the impression given to the fictional audience is that Socrates *is* committed", while the reader of the dialogue "is given sufficient indications to realize that (...) Socrates is being 'ironic' (...)" – although we should rather not invoke the much misused concept of 'Socratic irony'.

[52] Kahn (236) rightly stresses that, although "the hedonist premiss did logical work *only* in the Dialogue with the Many, by eliminating the ordinary understanding of *akrasia* (...) the later stretches of the argument would collapse if *akrasia* were not eliminated." Cf. Kahn (237): "The addition of *to kalon* in Section II [358a-e] allows the final argument to re-establish contact with the moral-social perspective within which courage can be found both admirable and good. And it is this introduction of *to kalon* that explains how Socrates is able to perform the sleight-of-hand trick by which courage and cowardice are transformed into wisdom and ignorance." Vlastos (301) makes Socrates "for the purposes of the argument" just ignore "the necessary bond between goodness and moral virtue": "if one has not yet come in sight of the Sovereignty of Virtue, hedonism (...) would provide one with a low–grade morality of utility which, bad as it is, could at least save one from the self–destructive ways of the likes of Critias and Alcibiades." Cf. Mill (a) 418: "according to the Socrates of the *Protagoras*, (...) virtue is an affair of calculation, (...) But the elements computed are the agent's own pains and pleasures, omitting those of other people, and of mankind. The system is thus a selfish one; though only theoretically so since its propounder would have held fast to the doctrine that the just is the only happy life, *i.e.* (according to the theory of this dialogue) the one which affords to the agent himself the greatest excess of pleasure over pain."

his conversation partner has said, but what he, according to Plato, should have said, had he spoken his mind.

This is the more remarkable when we realize that, further on, Protagoras is led to explain to the Many precisely what he himself implied when he said that some pleasant things are not good: *viz.* that they "call some pleasures wrong because of what comes later, diseases and the like." (353e1-2)

We must conclude that neither Socrates nor Protagoras as Plato has presented them do believe in the premise on which Socrates will base his argument that courage is knowledge; on the contrary: the wording of Protagoras' first proviso (εἴπερ τοῖς καλοῖς ζῴη ἡδόμενος) reflects what Plato himself believed, whereas Protagoras' classification of pleasures ("some are good, others are not, and a third class is neutral") is not subjected to further examination, despite the fact that it may well reflect the belief of the historical Protagoras himself. So Plato is indeed not investigating a belief of Protagoras, but a (strong) version of hedonism that will enable him to conduct the conversation with the Many in such a way that Protagoras will have to acknowledge (implicitly) that the Many do not subscribe to Homo Mensura.

6.2. Before capitalizing on the equation of the 'pleasant' and the 'good', Socrates makes the company assent to the other points on which Protagoras had challenged him: (1) "all actions are commendable (καλαί) and useful (ὠφέλιμοι[53]) which are taken with a view to leading a painless and pleasant life," and (2) "commendable activities are both good (καλόν) and useful (ὠφέλιμον)" (358b2–6). The latter statement has the air of a truism: no Greek would easily maintain that what is both good and useful is not also commendable. To the statement in its reversed form, however, one can easily object that some commendable actions are not useful. By presenting his 'conclusion' in this form Socrates manages to get rid of Protagoras' earlier statement that, in order to be termed 'good', a pleasant activity has to be 'useful', without thereby committing himself to the unqualified equation of 'good' and 'useful'.

By the statement that "all actions are commendable which are taken with a view to leading a painless and pleasant life," the audience

[53] Burnet has followed Schleiermacher in deleting καὶ ὠφέλιμοί, which gives us two subsequent steps: (a) all actions which are taken with a view to leading a painless and pleasant life are commendable, and (b) commendable activities are both good and useful.

is invited to eliminate the proviso Protagoras made earlier on (351c1).[54] We may observe with Taylor (201-2) that "it is hard to see what can have produced Protagoras' change of mind." One suspects, however, that the proviso owes its presence to the fact that leaving out the relation between 'pleasant' and 'commendable' – and the *reservatio mentis* that goes with his using the term 'pleasant'– would have committed Socrates himself to the unqualified identification of the pleasant and the good. The proviso serves a double purpose: it is part of Plato's portrait of Protagoras as a vain and profit-seeking 'sophist' who cares about his reputation, and at the same time leaves Socrates himself free to plead that "his tongue is under oath, his heart unsworn" (Eur. *Hipp.* 612).

7. *A solid reality among shadows?*

At the end of the dialogue, Socrates concludes that Protagoras has maintained that virtue is both something other than knowledge and teachable, whereas he himself insists that virtue is not teachable and "seems bent on contradicting himself by demonstrating that, nevertheless, everything is knowledge" (361b1: *πάντα χρήματα ἐστιν ἐπιστήμη*[55]). The wider significance of Socrates' *ἀπορία* becomes manifest in the conclusion of the *Meno*.[56] There, after having argued that virtue must be some kind of wisdom, Socrates argues that, if this is so, virtue must be teachable. Since, however, no one can been found who qualifies as a teacher, virtue cannot be taught and therefore is not wisdom (98e7 f.). As it has been shown to be acquired neither by nature nor by teaching, it appears that whoever has it gets it by divine dispensation (99e6). Such a man would be among the living what Homer said Tiresias was among the dead: the only one in the underworld who

---

[54] Cf. Kahn (237, note 34): "Protagoras had attempted to introduce the dimension of social-moral approval into the initial discussion of hedonism, by objecting that a pleasant life was good 'on condition that one takes pleasure in honorable things. But this effort to limit the hedonistic account of the good is brushed aside by Socrates, who will insist (and get Protagoras to agree) that the Many have no ultimate criterion to appeal to other than pleasure and pain. Consideration of *to kalon* is reintroduced after the Dialogue with the Many is concluded, at 358b5 and 359e5 ff."

[55] This, of course, alludes to Homo Mensura.

[56] The *Meno* reads like the "determined attack on virtue itself" that is desired by Socrates at the end of the *Protagoras*. It is not so much "the direct sequel to the *Protagoras*" (Kahn 212), as its positive counterpart: it offers what was withheld from Protagoras, by developing "a concept of knowledge such that virtue can be knowledge and still not teachable." (quoted from Woodruff 83)

kept his wits. Where virtue is concerned, he would be "like a solid reality among shadows" (100a1 ff.).

This description of the philosopher among his fellow men reflects the paradox of Plato's position as it is illustrated by the simile of the Cave in the *Republic.* There, the man who has looked upon the sun, when brought back to his old place, provokes laughter when he makes an attempt to explain to his fellow prisoners that their world is not the real world. They will say that "he has returned from his journey with his eyes ruined. And if it were possible to lay hands on and to kill the man who tries to release them and lead them up, then they would kill him" (*Resp.* 517a1ff.).[57]

As we know, for instance, from the *Seventh Letter*, the driving force behind Plato's social philosophy was his conviction that existing societies were sick and the condition of their laws incurable. He, therefore, saw himself "forced to say, in praise of true philosophy, that from her height alone it is possible to discern what the nature of justice is" (326a5 ff.).

If, however, the knowledge that inspires the true philosopher cannot be taught or even communicated to others – "philosophy (...) being impossible for the multitude" (*Resp.* 494a4) – then, paradoxically, from a viewpoint of communication with his fellow-men, Plato finds himself in the very same position Protagoras has been manoeuvred into by Socrates: he may very well end up discovering himself to be the only one to believe what he believes – the fundamental difference being, of course, that, to Plato, his belief represents the final and absolute truth, whereas to Protagoras as Plato understands him his belief must be as 'true' as any other.

The full extent of the problem this confronted Plato with can be gauged from a passage in the *Seventh Letter* (343d1-e1): "But when it is 'the fifth' about which we are compelled to answer questions or to make explanations, then anyone who wishes to refute what we are saying has the advantage, and can make the propounder of a doctrine, whether in writing or in speaking or in answering questions, seem to most of his listeners completely ignorant of the matter on which he is trying to speak or write. Those who are listening sometimes do not

[57] Cf. *Apol.* 32a1ff.: "The true champion of justice, if he intends to survive even for a short time, must necessarily confine himself to private life and leave politics alone." This much-disputed statement may reflect Plato's own feeling rather than that of the historic Socrates.

[58] It would not seem to be too far-fetched to see here a reference to Protagoras.

realize that it is not the mind (ψυχή) of the speaker or writer that is being tested (ἐλέγχεται), but these four instruments mentioned, each of which is by nature defective."

So Plato had to do what he could to demolish the Protagorean position without allowing himself to argue from his opponent's presuppositions, which would have vitiated his argument from the start because they would block the way to the *demonstrandum*, and expose Plato himself to the reproach of confusing 'knowledge' and 'belief'.

As far as I can see, this may be what motivated Plato to return to Protagoras in the *Theaetetus*: he must have realized that he could not shake off the 'sophist' just by meeting him on his own ground, as he had attempted to do in the *Protagoras*. He had to do the utmost to convince others that, on his own presuppositions, he himself was right in maintaining that Protagoras was wrong, and that, as a consequence, it was necessary to concentrate political power in the hands of philosophers so as to force society into conforming to the right way of life.

However this may be, in the end, Plato seems to have resigned himself to the impossibility of engaging the attention of even an elite to the world view he had attempted to prepare them for in the 'threshold' dialogues: "we must not take into consideration on any principle of 'correctness' (κατ' οὐδεμίαν ὀρθότητα[58]) whether their (i.e. the philosophers') rule be by laws or without them, over willing or unwilling subjects (...). They may purge the city for its benefit (ἐπ' ἀγαθῷ) by putting some of the citizens to death or banishing others (...). So long as they work on a reasoned scientific principle following essential justice, and act to save and improve[59] the state so far as may be, we must call them real statesmen, and say that the state that is ruled by these standards enjoys good government" (ταύτην ... ὀρθὴν πολιτείαν εἶναι ῥητέον) (*Politicus* 293c5 ff.).

Ultimately, Plato went as far as to exclude from society those atheists who teach the impressionable multitude things the philosopher knows to be dangerous, and to put them into jail in order to work on the σωτηρία of their souls. The man, however, who "besides believing that all things are empty of gods (...) is a prey to an uncontrollable urge to experience pleasure and avoid pain,[60] has a retentive memory

---

[59] The Platonic connotations of 'save' (σῴζοντες) and 'improve' (ἐκ χείρονος βελτίω ποιοῦσι) mark the distance from Protagoras' Myth.

[60] Cf. the way Socrates, in the *Protagoras*, has used the hedonist principle against Protagoras.

and is capable of shrewd insights" is a much more serious danger to society. "He is the sort of fellow who will make a diviner and go in for all sorts of legerdemain; sometimes he'll turn into a dictator or a demagogue or a general, or a plotter in secret rites; and he is the man who invents the tricks of the so-called sophists." If he proves incurable, he "deserves to die for his sins not just once or twice but many times." (*Laws* 908c1ff.) The observation that Protagoras seems to answer this description makes one doubt whether Plato himself believed that Socrates' argument in the *Theaetetus* was successful.

We may, then, conclude that the *Protagoras*, far from being a "battle of wits" or the young Plato's brilliant portrayal of Socrates' ability to beat Protagoras on his own ground, is to be read as Plato's first attempt to deal with an opponent who made no claim to knowledge nor maintained that what he was saying was 'true' (either *simpliciter*, or 'true for you or me'),[61] and therefore was inaccessible to the normal procedures of Socrates, whose wisdom consisted in that he "did not think that he knew what he did not know." (*Ap.* 21d7) One may differ on the degree of hostility that is betrayed by Plato's portrait of Protagoras and his beliefs, but I would definitely not be prepared to follow Guthrie (IV, 232) in taking it that it was Plato's intention to show "the strength rather than the weakness of the adversary."

If my reading of the *Protagoras* is correct, the dialogue was surely not written by a youthful Plato, who still had to discover the principles that were to inspire him later on. On the contrary: when he wrote the dialogue, Plato must have been fully conscious of the fact that he had to provide a final answer to Homo Mensura, since its consequences represented a serious threat to his conviction that only the recognition of the deep gulf that divides mere belief from knowledge in the full sense of the word can provide a basis for the absolute morality independent of time or circumstance, that he deemed a *conditio sine qua non* for making human society follow what he considered to be the path of justice. Both the *Theaetetus* and the *Sophist* testify to his feeling that the argument developed by Socrates in the *Protagoras* was, perhaps, not the clinching argument he needed for silencing this formidable opponent.

---

[61] Cf. p. 171-2 of this volume

THE CLASSICISTS' NOSTALGIA

Wieviel Macht über die Dinge hat der Mensch? Das ist die Frage bei aller Erziehung. Um nun zu zeigen, wie ganz anders es sein kann, zeige man zum Beispiel die Griechen. Die Römer braucht man um zu zeigen, wie es so wurde. (F. Nietzsche)

῞Οταν τις ἐπὶ τῷ νοεῖν καὶ ἐξηγεῖσθαι δύνασθαι τὰ Χρυσίππου βιβλία σεμνύνηται, λέγε αὐτὸς πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ὅτι εἰ μὴ Χρυσίππος ἀσαφῶς ἐγεγράφει, οὐδὲν ἂν εἶχεν οὗτος, ἐφ' ᾧ ἐσεμνύνετο. (Epictetus)

1. *Introduction*

The eleventh chapter of Rudolf Pfeiffer's *History of Classical Scholarship from 1300 to 1850* starts with the observation that in the seventeenth century – apart from of a few individual scholars who made gradual progress along traditional lines – "the characteristic scene in most continental countries was that of self-satisfied polymaths filling enormous volumes with collected antiquities and reproducing in their editions of texts the accumulated notes of the last two centuries." This less than generous and disputable characterization seems inspired by the author's wish to create a rhetorical contrast with what is to follow: "never in our history was stimulating criticism more urgently needed than at that moment; and at exactly that moment there arose in England the critical genius of Bentley."

Next, 15 pages are devoted to Bentley (1662-1742), with his "contemporaries and successors" (Porson, Elmsley, Musgrave, Tyrwhitt, Dobree, Markland, Dawes, Hemsterhuis, Valckenaer, Ruhnkenius) being allotted a mere five pages. The next part of the book is entitled *German Neohellenism* and opens with a discussion of Winckelmann and Wolf.

The opinion that becomes apparent in this presentation, in spite of variations in emphasis and tone, is not essentially different from the view Wilamowitz had laid down over fifty years earlier (1921) in his *Geschichte der Philologie.* With him too, Bentley's *Epistula ad Millium* (1691) is the start of a new era, the next milestone being the birth of the *Altertumswissenschaft*, for which "die esoterische Philologie" as it was practised in England and the Netherlands is considered an indispensable but surely not a satisfactory condition. The suggestion rather is that the study of antiquity would have died a slow death if it had not been saved by the fresh élan of German scholars, who realized that the

ancient texts will only come alive with the help of "die geschichtliche Forschung," which enables us "das ganze Leben ihrer Umgebung für unsere Phantasie wach[zu]rufen" (p. 37) – and for that the world had to wait for Winckelmann and Wolf. They represent a 'new renaissance' – a conviction Pfeiffer expresses with less rhetoric and equal clarity by placing Winckelmann on a par with Petrarch. The new spirit ("gleich mächtig in Poesie und Philosophie") that awakened in Germany "entdeckt das unsterbliche Hellenentum das er sich verwandt fühlt, saugt aus ihm die Lebenskraft der Freiheit und der Schönheit und führt mit Notwendigkeit zu einer Beschäftigung mit der hellenischen Poesie und Plastik, die allmählich wissenschaftlich-philologisch wird und schliesslich die geschichtliche Methode erreicht. Erst durch sie wird die antike Grammatik endgültig überholt, und nun erst ein inneres Verständnis der Vergangenheit, nicht nur der Antike, möglich." (*ibid.* 41)

On the basis of what is essentially a classicistic orientation regarding Greek civilization as a lasting source of inspiration – both aesthetically ('Schönheit') and ethically ('Freiheit') – here, the study of antiquity is motivated by the desire to get to know and experience the inspiring past from the inside. Incidentally, the way in which past generations had occupied themselves with ancient Greek art and literature is in effect disqualified as academic and out of touch with life itself, both past and present.

I will refrain from further analysing this – in many ways revealing – quotation and limit myself to observing that in the periodization advocated by Pfeiffer and Wilamowitz, Bentley has been made into the instigator of a new development – which, however, had to wait for inspiration for about a century, and was to gain its true significance only when the genius of Winckelmann and Wolf was fructified by the Greek spirit (or vice versa).

One of the consequences of this schema is that it imposes upon the eighteenth century a rather curious form of marking time. For Bentley's "contemporaries and successors" there was little else to do than proceed on the route indicated by Bentley, without knowing yet where it would lead. This is not just remarkable in itself, but at first sight also seems contrary to the fact that the primary conditions for a no longer classicistic but rather historical approach of antiquity had been met long before Winckelmann and Wolf.

The *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* and the *Battle of the Books* originated with the evolving emancipation from the normative value

of ancient culture – an emancipation which was speeded up by the development of the natural sciences of which Newton's *Principia Mathematica* (1687) was considered the epitome. The wish to uphold the permanent value of the classical authors against the criticism of those who claimed the superiority of contemporary science and literature, occasioned a growing need not only to understand but also to appreciate the classical authors within the framework of their own historical context. One example out of many is Madame Dacier's introduction to her translation of the *Iliad* (1711), where objections to Homer's alleged 'primitivism' are met by her pointing out that, in order to appreciate the superior qualities of Homer, one should take into account the conditions under which his work came to be. This development was already in full swing in Bentley's time, and towards the end of the eighteenth century it had become completely irreversible. One of the unsatisfactory aspects of the over-tidy paradigm advocated by Wilamowitz and Pfeiffer is that it glosses over the question of how Bentley's "contemporaries and successors" reacted to this process of emancipation that deeply affected the significance of their work to society.

The following is an attempt to address this question. My conclusion – which I hope to substantiate below – is that the eighteenth century, far from being a period of just marking time, was a crucial period in the history of classical scholarship, not because it brought essential innovations with regard to the study of classical antiquity as such, but because the relationship between those who were active in the field and the society surrounding them underwent radical changes that would prove to be momentous for the time to come.

I have carried out direct research into the views of Tib. Hemsterhuis (1685-1766), Valckenaer (1715-1785) and Ruhnkenius (1723-1798) – three successive professors of Greek at Leiden University who, together, span the entire period from Bentley to Wolf, and who made Leiden into one of the main centres of classical scholarship. In addition, I have collected information – partly from indirect sources – on the views of Gesner (1691-1761) and Ernesti (1707-1781). The former was rector of the Leipziger Thomasschule and professor of Poetry and Rhetoric at Göttingen since 1734; the latter was Gesner's successor at the Thomasschule and besides and subsequently professor of Rhetoric and, since 1759, of Theology at the University of Leipzig. The last part of my argument tries to specify the relationship between the beliefs and practice of the scholars discussed and the development of the *Altertumswissenschaft*.

1.1. In order to obtain the framework needed for my argument, as a further introduction, more must be said about the place Bentley occupies in the historical development I want to discuss.

In 1692 we encounter Bentley on the pulpit of St. Martin's in London, defending Christian religion against fashionable forms of atheism and deism, thus executing the testamentary dispositions of Robert Boyle, whose wish it was that a series of sermons should be devoted to the compatibility of Christian faith and the findings of the natural sciences. In his sermons, Bentley made extensive use of Newton's *Principia Mathematica* (1687). Newton – who, for that matter, devoted much of his time to theology and alchemy – reacted to Bentley's argument in four letters (*Four Letters from Sir Isaac Newton*) from which it becomes clear that Bentley's understanding of the *Principia* left little or nothing to be desired: he was perfectly able to understand and discuss scientific issues that, in the near future, would become absolute *terra incognita* for classicists. The explanation of this, as of Bentley's membership of the *Royal Academy* (founded in 1662), or his regular meetings with Newton and Locke, is of course to be found first of all in Bentley's formidable intellect. However, at least as important is the fact that truly thorough knowledge of the classical authors in these years could still be of service to those who were working at the forefront of other disciplines. Conversations like those between Newton, Bentley and Locke would soon become completely impossible, the expansion of knowledge and the specialization that went with it resulting in a situation in which a more than amateurish crossing of the boundaries between what C.P. Snow has termed the "Two Cultures" was no longer practicable. Most relevant – apart from the sophisticated mathematics that were both the basis of Newton's discoveries and a *conditio sine qua non* for understanding and using his results – are the irrevocable changes to the classical image of man and the world that went with the work of, for instance, Harvey (*De motu cordis et sanguinis*, 1628), Christiaan Huygens (1629-1695), Johan de Witt (1671: actuarial mathematics) and Van Leeuwenhoek (whose microscope, in 1683, made the bacteria that live in human saliva visible to the eye).

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, the development referred to had been underway for some time. Copernicus (*De revolutionibus orbium caelestium*, 1543) had done away with a number of auxiliary hypotheses that had become necessary to support the classical geocentric paradigm, Kepler's[1] *Astronomia nova* (1609) had created a new astronomy, "one that broke, as Copernican astronomy had not, with

the classical tradition that stretched from Ptolemy to his own time" (Grafton 1997, 185-6), and Galilei (1554-1642) had removed the fundamental difference between 'earth' and 'heaven' that had been adhered to since antiquity. In fact, Newton's laws of gravitation – with their spectacular predictive potential – which put the theories of Copernicus, Kepler and Galilei into one coherent system, made it manifest that the days of ancient science were definitely over, and provided an enormous impetus to the hopeful belief that the correct and methodical use of man's intellectual faculties would enable humanity to unravel the secrets of nature and to influence the course of events in the service of progress.

The reversal of perspective, which causes one to see the future, as it were, before one rather than behind, and is inspired by great expectations about the perfectibility of man and the possibilities of improving his future, was a lengthy process that appears to have started relatively early in the seventeenth century – in the years, that is to say, when Bacon (1561-1626) advocated substituting his inductive method for the deductive method which he considered to impede scientific progress since, in his view, it offers nothing but logical implications of 'first principles' and therefore cannot really increase our knowledge and understanding of the world. Titles such as *The Advancement of Learning* and *Novum Organon Scientiarum* have a programmatic significance – the second in particular because of the implication it carries that it would be both necessary and possible to replace the Aristotelian *Organon*. Bacon's presumption was shared by his onetime secretary Hobbes (1588-1679), and by Descartes (1596-1650), who may be said to have been "the chief architect of the seventeenth-century intellectual revolution which destabilized the traditional doctrines of medieval and Renaissance scholasticism (...)."[2] In feeling the need for renewal and expansion of human knowledge both Bacon and Descartes were inspired by the wish to ameliorate the human condition. They felt that ancient philosophy had no answer to sickness, poverty, hunger and the disastrous consequences of war. Bacon, in his own words, worked "for the relief of man's estate", and Descartes was guided by the principle "qui nous oblige à procurer autant qu'il est en nous le bien général de tous les hommes." In his view, it is possible to develop a practical

---

[1] For an informative description of Kepler's (and Galilei's) "commerce with the classics" see Grafton 1997, 185-224.

[2] Quoted from J. Cottingham, *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* s.v. 'Descartes'.

philosophy, which will give us insight into natural processes, comparable with our knowledge of all kinds of human skills and crafts, "et ainsi nous rendra comme maîtres et possesseurs de la nature." In their view, the time-honoured body of learning they had been taught when they were young resulted in stagnation and immobilization instead of enhancing the well-being of humanity. So, to use Bacon's famous words: they had to repudiate the "idols of the theatre" that were embodied in the dogmatic-philosophical systems of antiquity.

Important consequences of the above are the gradual disappearance of aesthetic, theological and 'mystical' factors (such as the significance of the perfect circle, or the number seven) as foundations for the formation of theory and, more importantly, the replacement of a teleological paradigm by a mechanistic world picture[3] that regards the universe as a world of events running in a steady mechanism of before and after, as well as the rise of a totally changed sense of self, with the corresponding increase of the room for questioning certainties that had long been regarded as unassailable.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, an empiricist way of proceeding seemed to promise progress even in those fields – such as ethics, political theory and psychology – where the more moderate 'Moderns' still had been prepared to acknowledge the superiority of ancient philosophy. A quotation taken from La Mettrie may serve as an illustration (*L'homme machine*, 1748): "prenons donc le bâton de l'expérience et laissons là l'histoire de toutes les vaines opinions des Philosophes", and "commençons donc et voions non ce qu'on a pensé, mais ce qu'il faut penser pour le repos de la vie."

It will be clear that developments such as these were bound to have an effect on the position of those who occupied themselves with the study of antiquity. If one studies the history of classical scholarship as a subject in its own right, isolating it from its position and function in society, one can, perhaps, justify regarding Bentley's performance as a new beginning – although it should be said that a comparison of his work with that of, for instance, Poliziano, Valla, Erasmus, Scaliger or Perizonius makes even this proposition disputable. One would rather suspect that the classicists' inclination to regard Bentley as the start of a 'new age' has been strengthened by the fact that among the classical scholars of his time, independent minds of such outstanding quality, regrettably, had become the exception rather than the rule.

[3] Cf. Dijksterhuis 1961.

If, however, one focuses on the connections between Bentley's learned activity and the concerns of his contemporaries, it would seem more appropriate to regard him as one of the very last representatives of a period in which having access to the legacy of antiquity was indispensable and essential even to the advanced scientific research of one's own time. The period when, for instance, Vulcanius (1540-1609), as a Greek scholar, was consulted by physicians and physicists, Manilius' *Astronomica* could serve as an introduction to astronomy, and Boerhaave frequently used the texts of Hippocrates and Galen in the Leiden library, can still be recognized in a number of aspects of Bentley's work, but is definitely coming to an end. The same can be illustrated, with reversed indications as it were, by the fact that someone like Scaliger's pupil Grotius (1583-1645) could be an accomplished and influential jurist, diplomat and theologian, and at the same time produce philological work of outstanding quality, or that Leibniz – whom Frederick III, on the occasion of the foundation (1700) of the Berlin *Societät der Wissenschaften*, called "eine Akademie für sich allein" – could still be a discussion partner to be taken seriously by classicists, even if his intention to participate in editing the text of Martianus Capella never materialized.[4]

This sketchy description has to suffice here to remind the reader of the conditions under which the defenders of the normative authority of classical antiquity were fighting (and losing) their battle in the final decades of the seventeenth century. A correct assessment of the reaction of the classicists, during and after Bentley's time, to the diminishing relevance of their object of study should take into account that in the last two decades of the seventeenth century the process of the study of antiquity losing its natural primacy had been underway for quite some time: as the son of Isaac Casaubonus (1559-1614) wrote in 1668: "The first blow of misfortune came from the Cartesian philosophy, which knocked the good books out of the hands of the young, who are foolish and desire novelty. Then one passed on to 'Experiments', where all learning and wisdom are now located. These clever men call themselves 'Realists', an attractive title; the rest, whatever sort of literature they are distinguished for, are dismissed as 'Verbal' and 'Idealist'."[5] Many classicists must have realized that they had to redefine the role of classical scholarship so as to prevent it from being

---

[4] See M. Haupt, *Ges. Schriften*, I, 215 ff.

regarded as a mere *disciplina verborum* and to make it clear that what it had to offer was still valuable – or even indispensable – to their contemporaries.

Before we ascribe symbolic significance to the fact that Bentley's *Dissertation upon the Epistles of Phalaris* (1697) was inspired by Sir William Temple's claim that these letters were the oldest and therefore unparalleled examples of epistolary art, we should realize that both Poliziano and Erasmus had anticipated Bentley in proving that the letters were, as Erasmus had it, *declamatiunculae* from late antiquity.

Bentley's main motive to prove once and for all that the letters were a forgery apparently was that some classical scholars saw in Temple's loud confirmation of the superiority of the 'Ancients' – summarized in his preposterous statement that "there is nothing new in astronomy to vie with the ancients unless it be the Copernican system, nor in physic, unless Harvey's circulation of the blood" (*An Essay upon Ancient and Modern Learning*, 1690) – a welcome occasion for enhancing the importance and social standing of their own profession. The 'Oxford men' used Temple's recommendation of the 'Phalaris' letters as an opportunity to serve a receptive book market by bringing out a new edition of the letters (Boyle, 1694). They were even prepared to silence their scientific conscience and to defend the authenticity of the letters against Bentley's attack (1698: *Bentley's Dissertation examined by Boyle*). They apparently wanted to please the mighty patron Temple was by showing that there was nothing to fear from a simple clergyman, who did not belong to the High and Mighty, and whose vehemence could only be due to his lack of manners and his nasty character. This way of socially disqualifying Bentley will have gone down well. After all, Temple's own argument in favour of the authenticity of the letters made it clear why he – himself the daily companion of kings and aristocrats – considered Poliziano's suggestion that Lucian was the author of the letters nonsensical: "I know, several learned men (or that usually pass for such, under the name of critics) have not esteemed them genuine; and Politian, with some others, have attributed them to Lucian: but I think such diversity of passions, upon such variety of actions and passages of life and government; such freedom of thought, such boldness of expression; such bounty to his friends, such scorn of his enemies; such honour of learned men, such esteem of good; such knowledge of life, such contempt of death, with such fierceness of

[5] Quoted by Grafton 1991, 3.

nature and cruelty of revenge, could never be represented but by him that possessed them. And I esteem Lucian to have been no more capable of writing than of acting what Phalaris did. In all one writ, you find the scholar or the sophist; and in all other, the tyrant and the commander." The reader will have noted the subtle distinction between *learned men* and *critics* and *scholars*: clearly, Boyle and his colleagues hoped to be reckoned among the former rather than the latter category.

This kind of playing the man rather than the ball betrays that the underlying differences concerned the social standing of classical scholars and their subject rather than Bentley's professional merits. It is characteristic that Pope also attempted to silence the formidable critic Bentley was ("A pretty poem, Mr. Pope, but certainly not Homer") by ridiculing him as a pedant and a schoolmaster who had no sense of poetry and could therefore safely be disregarded by the gentlemen and gentlewomen who constituted the readership of Pope's lucrative translation of Homer:

> Mistress! Dismiss that rabble from your throne:
> Avaunt! – Is Aristarchus yet unknown?
> Thy mighty scholiast whose unwearied pains
> Made Horace dull and humbled Milton's strains.
> Turn what they will to verse, their toil is vain:
> Critics like me shall make it prose again.
> Roman and Greek grammarians! know your better,
> Author of something yet more great than letter;
> While tow'ring o'er your alphabet, like Saul
> Stands our digamma, and o'ertops them all!
> (Pope, *Dunciad* IV)

Bentley's *Dissertation* – significantly written in English rather than in Latin – seems then to have been directed less against Temple's die-hard way of holding on to the absolute superiority of antiquity than against those of his contemporaries who were inclined to believe his fellow-scholars who hoped to serve the cause of the 'Ancients' at the cost of lowering the standards of their own profession. He made himself unpopular with many of his colleagues by squarely confronting them (and their patrons) with the fact that a fair comparison of the merits of antiquity with those of modern times should be based on sufficient knowledge and expertise, in order for the products of antiquity to be both understood and assessed against the background of the age in which they came into being. This provides the basis and

clears the way for studying antiquity as a historical period with its own, specific characteristics and for an unprejudiced evaluation of its products – confirming the permanent value of some and acknowledging that others were definitely outdated or just mediocre.

It seems to have been precisely Bentley's self-confidence as an appreciated conversation partner of luminaries such as Newton and Locke that made him independent enough to expose the dubious behaviour of scholars who both lacked understanding of the groundbreaking results of modern science and were prepared to sacrifice the progress that could be made in their own field to their desire to hold on the exclusive right to act as the pre-eminent guardians of civilization and educators of an elite that did not want to be bothered by learned comments: "Busby [headmaster of Westminster School] strictly forbade the Use of Notes, and for our Greek and Latin Authors we had nothing but the plain Text in a correct and chaste edition (...) Comments are generally an Art of making Authors difficult with Pretence of explaining them." (Henry Felton, 1715: *A Dissertation on Reading the Classics and Forming a Just Style*). So as early as in those years, classicists were inclined to seek the justification of their activities in "the snobbish value of an education which is useless to any but a leisured class" – an inclination Gilbert Murray, 250 years later (*JHS* 65, 1947, 1), still had occasion to warn them against. Bentley would surely have agreed with William Wotton, who, in a letter to Leibniz (1715) exclaimed: "Would God that a way might be found to reconcile learning with the education of a gentleman!"

2. *Tib. Hemsterhuis*

A summary of Hemsterhuis' ideas on the object and objectives of classical scholarship can be found in his inaugural lecture *De litterarum humaniorum studiis ad mores emendandos virtutisque cultum conferendis* (Leiden 1740). In his opinion, classical scholarship is concerned with what one can learn from the study of civilized languages (*eruditae linguae)* as such, combined with what the ancient sources (*monumenta vetusta*) can teach us about the history of civilized peoples (*politiores populi*), and, last but not least, with the knowledge and wisdom that have been laid down in documents from the very start of western civilization. The latter part of his programme comes close to August Boeckh's famous "die Erkenntnis des Erkannten."

Accordingly, it is the classical scholar's job to explain the works of

the ancient authors (*prisci scriptores*), and if necessary to restore the splendour of their writings, which they lost due to continued neglect and ignorance. It is his task to separate the genuine from the false (*genuina a falsis*), to trace errors that have crept in, and to provide a critical assessment of what does not meet the highest standards, either aesthetically or according to the norms of *recta ratio*. All these activities are geared towards supporting – or rather cooperating with – the other sciences (*ceterae disciplinae*). Furthermore, the study of the *litterae humaniores* has a propaedeutic function: it strengthens the student's intellectual capacity by developing his ability to judge correctly and to think methodically. Finally, it combines *delectatio et voluptas* with moral edification.

Combining these summarizing statements with what can be gathered from two other public lectures (*De linguae graecae praestantia ex ingenio Graecorum et moribus probata*, 1720, and *De mathematum et philosophiae studio cum literis humanioribus conjungendo*, 1739) inspires the following observations.

First, it strikes one that the ultimate unity of all human knowledge and science, for Hemsterhuis, who started his career as a professor of philosophy and mathematics, is of great importance and significance. His 1739 lecture is a plea to combine the study of philosophy, mathematics, natural science and antiquity, and makes it abundantly clear that what he aimed at was no longer self-evident. Hemsterhuis' reasons for advocating cooperation between scientific disciplines are partly derived from the advantages it can offer a classical scholar (who needs to be schooled in methodical and logical thinking), but also, and even mainly, from his conviction that the classicist who is exclusively concerned with the formal aspects of the Greek and Latin texts isolates his object of study or rather: destroys its natural function.

Extensively and emphatically, Hemsterhuis rejects the reduction of the study of the *litterae humaniores* to a mere *disciplina verborum*. Those who restrict their interest this way, merely concentrate on *literarum apices* and *comtuli loquendi modi*, and obtain nothing but an *incondita historiarum farrago*. They take away any hopes classical philology may have of expanding, or even retaining its territory, and forget that it is the task of the classicist *ut rerum veritatisque cognitioni studeat, minoribus imbutus mysteriis maiora adspiret, variam denique supellectilem ex vetustis monumentis colligat, qua augustam illam doctrinarum aedem exornet*. In order to fulfil this task satisfactorily, the scholar should realize that his subject is part of an integrated whole of knowledge and science: the different disciplines

should support each other. The observation that antiquity achieved far more in those fields that *humanarum actionum finibus circumscribuntur*, than in the natural sciences, leads Hemsterhuis to urge his audience not to despise recently acquired natural scientific knowledge. On the contrary: the scholar who manages to combine the results of ancient and modern scientific research *is mihi demum ad veram solidamque eruditionem recta via contendere videtur.*

Understandably, the emphasis in this view is less on the – no longer realistic – possibility that the classicist himself could be active in all fields with the same degree of success. Materially speaking, the relevance of what he has to offer is more or less limited to those disciplines in which ancient results were still considered indispensable. However, if the classicist does not also concern himself with those fields where new insights have superseded those of antiquity, he is as one-sided in his approach as those whose enthusiasm for the triumphs of modern science has led them to forget the *bene vivendi ratio*, and thus to cloud the *splendor doctrinarum.* In other words: Hemsterhuis sees the work of the classical scholar as an integrated part of a coherent system of scientific disciplines, and deems the study of the *litterae humaniores* essential, in some cases because of its material contribution to the whole of human knowledge, and always because limiting oneself to a single area of human activity harms one's intelligence and moral character. This lesson can be learnt from the Greeks themselves, who, right from the start, succeeded in combining *cognitionem rerum* with *morum virtutisque cultum*, and accordingly, paid attention to *all* areas of science in their mutual coherence which, in the last instance, derives from the fact that they should *all* be at the service of mankind.

For the daily practice of the classicist profession, this view entails that classical philology should be guided by the principles of reasoned method rather than by the *libera vis ingenii et ictus ille mentis divinatorius.* Preliminary training in philosophy and the exact sciences is as essential for a classicist as the study of the *humaniora* is for those who aim to study natural science or law. Accordingly, Hemsterhuis seeks to exploit for classical philology those methods that had proven their value in other sciences. A case in point is his confidence in *analogy* as a basis for discovering (or recovering) facts of language that cannot be ascertained by direct observation. It is paradoxical that precisely what he has to say on this issue, nowadays, is completely outdated – although his opinions on the older phases of the Greek language

compare positively with the speculations Valckenaer presented in his *Observationes academicae quibus via munitur ad origines Graecas investigandas lexicorumque defectus resarciendos* (posthumously published by E. Scheidius in 1790).

Hemsterhuis' activities in the field of linguistics were aimed at finding a basis for an analysis of the characteristic features of the Greek language that would make it clear that it shows much more regularity than was believed by those whose lack of insight made them find it exceptionally difficult and who therefore refrained from learning it. Hemsterhuis, on his part, wants to free the Greek language from the reproach of being less 'logical' than Latin and to 'sell' Greek to his contemporaries as the rich and clear language of a highly gifted and humane people. The way in which he illustrates his convictions about the exceptional *ubertas* and *elegantia* of Greek in his *Lectio publica de originibus linguae graecae*, shows, if one can put it that way, sound eighteenth-century belief. The Greeks were a *gens curiosa*: they looked beyond their own borders and had nothing against importing foreign notions and products; when they developed philosophy and science, they themselves created the means of expression needed for these new subjects; they strove for improvement and innovation; their literary production reached a wide audience that was capable of critically judging what it was being offered, and their innate sense of freedom becomes manifest in their outspokenness, their παρρησία. The latter becomes clear from a comparison of the writings of an Aelius Aristides with those from the fifth century or with Lucian, who was a *vir ingenii liberrimi*, and for that very reason succeeded in writing pure classical Attic.

Views such as these enabled Hemsterhuis to work energetically and optimistically towards the dissemination of the knowledge of Greek, as becomes apparent from the fact that, in his editions of Lucian's *Colloquia* and Aristophanes' *Plutus* (the choice of which is not surprising in view of the above), he intentionally did *not* provide a Latin translation *ut ex ipsis fontibus vim linguae puriorem haurire consuescant.*

Summarizing:

(a) For Hemsterhuis, classical scholarship has its own, permanent place within, and should not be isolated from, the coherent whole of sciences (*augusta doctrinarum aedes*) which exist for the benefit of mankind, whose progress and morality they are to enhance.

(b) There is no fundamental, but only a factual, difference between studying the writings from antiquity and those from later periods.

(c) The main goal of classical scholarship is to make or keep the ancient texts available for the sake of their content (*rerum veritatisque cognitio*).

(d) The secondary goal is to make an essential contribution to the basic education needed for all academic studies, with regard to both formal and material aspects, and also on behalf of the moral edification and pleasure of the *studiosi*.

Opinions such as these are to be viewed against the background of the position the study of Greek had at the universities. Both the content of the curriculum and the level of education offered at gymnasia showed considerable differences in practice. Students entered university at varying ages, sometimes at a very young age, and were expected to start their studies with a propaedeutic phase, in which – next to Latin and Greek – history, philosophy, mathematics and physics all played a part, albeit a modest one – which, for that matter, makes Hemsterhuis' plea for the unity of all sciences more than just a daydream. Relatively high requirements were set for Latin, and relatively modest ones for Greek, with the latter varying according to the subject the student wanted to read, and being most demanding for prospective theologians.

In practice, this will have meant that those whose task it was to teach Greek could only count on compulsory interest on the part of students who had to prove their competence in Greek in order to be admitted to the faculty of Theology, or needed a statement that they had attended the lectures in Greek with satisfactory results. It does not take much to imagine that the lecturer involved in fact had to combat the students' inclination to meet such requirements only minimally, the prospective theologians being the only ones who would need knowledge of Greek later on as well – which, of course, did not guarantee an interest in classical Greek.

Interest in Greek at a level that could be called professional had to be won, and neither the organization of the propaedeutic phase nor the heavy teaching load of the professors will have proven motivating forces in this respect. Moreover, the annual income of the professors partly depended on the number of students who actually attended their lectures. What Hemsterhuis – and, after him, Valckenaer – therefore tried to offer is a conception of classical philology that could help justify and motivate the students' interest, and could promote further study and provide it at a responsibly scientific level that would offer an attractive challenge to talented students.

Facts such as these help one to understand that those whose job it was to teach Greek in a period of increasing specialization and growing success in the areas of mathematics, natural science and medicine, on the one hand tried to find a basis for arguing that the study of the ancient Greek writers was a *conditio sine qua non* for a successful career in one of the acknowledged academic disciplines (to which their own subject did not belong), and on the other, to substantiate the intrinsic interest of ancient literature and civilization in such a way that first-rate talent remained or became available for the advanced study of classical antiquity. The desire to show that classical philology both needs and benefits from the methods that had proved successful in other *disciplinae* fits this situation: a *disciplina verborum,* aimed at the accumulation of more and more *quisquiliae* would not have stood the ghost of a chance in the competitive struggle for the favour of gifted students and the public.

3. *L.C. Valckenaer*

Valckenaer did not systematically argue his views on the goals and characteristic features of classical scholarship to the same extent as Hemsterhuis. When one takes a closer look at his statements on the subject, his opinions about the *provincia* of classical scholarship do not appear to be essentially different from those of Hemsterhuis. What does strike one is that he, much more than his predecessor, emphasizes the propaedeutic nature of its contribution to academic studies. In his view, the *humaniora* must be made into more than just the *ancilla theologiae*: he wants the subject to be an integrated part of a preparatory course for *all* students, which is to inspire the *amor litterarum* that will enhance their further development, regardless of which *gravior disciplina* they want to study.

On the whole, Valckenaer seems to be more on the defensive than Hemsterhuis. His primary reason for studying the *litterae humaniores* is that it will introduce the students into a world in which the *sectae et familiae* of modern science did not yet exist: it will counter the potential damage of modern specialization by making the student experience a civilization in which the different *disciplinae* still cooperated for the benefit of all. For this, a good command of Greek is necessary: it is imperative that the students obtain *first hand* knowledge of Greek history and literature. Moreover, learning Greek will contribute to the more remote goal of training their intellect, and particularly of devel-

oping the ability to judge critically, as well as the moral character that makes for a freedom-loving citizen and patriot. Accordingly, the study is geared towards having the knowledge of the Greek language and history put at the service of a better understanding of underlying systematic connections and causal relations. Only those who have been educated in this way will deserve the title of *criticus*, who combines *studium linguarum, doctrina excellens, ingenium sagax, calor coniectandi* and *iudicandi virtus*.

Unlike Hemsterhuis, Valckenaer emphasizes that both *ingenii acumen* and *vis iudicandi* are innate qualities: the goal of education should be the further development and training of these faculties. Following Hemsterhuis and in the spirit of his time, Valckenaer is fully aware of the need for explicit methodical principles, but his appreciation of the part of innate abilities and intuition is notably greater. The very expression *calor coniectandi* conveys his conviction that the truth cannot be found without inspiration, a conviction that makes him even more ardent than Hemsterhuis in his loathing of the mere accumulation of *quisquiliae*. The knowledge of mere facts that is not aimed at tracing the motives, causes and laws that explain them has no value whatsoever. In this respect, he does not see a real difference between Scaliger, Casaubonus or Bentley on one side and Boerhaave, Newton or Leibniz on the other, even if the first studied a discipline that had not been defined as such (*nullius scientiae nomen profitentes*).

All in all, then, when we compare Valckenaer's views to those of Hemsterhuis, a considerable change of emphasis can be observed which cannot be traced back to differences in personality and character only. Unlike Hemsterhuis, Valckenaer is prepared to accept as a *fait accompli* the breaking up of the whole of sciences into a number of separate *disciplinae*. Accordingly, he finds the benefits of the study of antiquity less in acquiring knowledge of the material content of the ancient sources than in what the study of these sources contributes to the student's intellectual training and moral education, and to the discovery of the general principles that will enable him to understand human language and history. Theologians and jurists, physicians and natural scientists need to study the *humaniora* to establish a common foundation, but Valckenaer no longer pretends that it actually contributes to contemporary scientific discussion. He does however stick to the belief that reading the ancient authors – at least those who worked in a situation of political freedom – will provide an essential contribution to the development of wisdom and sense of freedom, and

to the ability to judge critically and to act in a civilized and morally responsible way.

As with Hemsterhuis, Valckenaer's convictions played a role in his choice of subject for his two *magna opera* – the editions of Euripides' *Phoenissae* and *Hippolytus.* As becomes apparent from his prefaces, he feels that the *suavitas* of Euripides will please the students more than the forbidding severity of Sophocles, and thus will help to promote their *amor humanitatis honestatisque.* Moreover, the representation of *furor et amor*, which suit the modern taste, will further enhance their enthusiasm. So, like Hemsterhuis, Valckenaer seeks to promote the Greek authors, but his 'selling technique' – which is also manifest in the fact that it is of great importance to him that a readable translation in Latin be provided in addition to the Greek text – shows that he was less optimistic than Hemsterhuis was about his chances of success. His commentaries offer much that can be neglected for the explanation of the text at hand, and apparently are partly intended to give those who study it (the editions are primarily meant for use in his own lectures), in passing, access to other, less immediately appealing Greek authors.

Valckenaer's treatment of the rhetorical theme *De causis neglectae literarum graecarum culturae* (1741), which had gradually become a topical issue, stands out because on the one hand he follows Hemsterhuis in regretting and seeking to counter the increasing disintegration that threatens to make the study of antiquity into a mere *disciplina verborum*, and on the other hand, takes it one step further: now that high patrons no longer regard the promotion of Greek studies as a prestige object, the subject, when isolated from contemporary concerns, is in danger of yielding too little news to attract those who are capable of achieving major scientific results.

In combination with Valckenaer's pride in those of his advanced students who – like his own son Johan – made a successful career in government and international diplomacy, all this reveals a certain readiness to face inevitable changes and to make the best of it by devising a strategy that will keep his field in a productive relationship with society rather than with other academic disciplines. This may have been one of his reasons for making tragedy and pastoral poetry (Theocritus, Bio, Moschus) rather than historical or philosophical prose the main subject of his lectures for advanced students.

Characteristic of the area of tension and uncertainty in which classicists found themselves in these years is Valckenaer's position with

regard to Latin. He attaches markedly little value to a strongly cultivated Latin style, albeit that his conviction that Latin is still indispensable as the international medium of communication between scholars goes so far that he cooperates in the production of a Latin translation of Bentley's *Dissertation on the Epistles of Phalaris* – an enterprise that impresses one as rather anachronistic: Bentley, of all people, with his highly personal and unique English style of writing could do perfectly without the benefit of being *Latinitate donatus* to make his *Dissertation* accessible to those who were not already more than familiar with it. After all, a hundred years had passed since Descartes wrote his *Discours de la Méthode* in French, hoping that "ceux qui ne se servent que de leur raison naturelle toute pure jugeront mieux de mes opinions que ceux qui ne croient qu' aux livres anciens", and assuming that those who knew Latin and yet belonged to the first group would read him anyway.

4. *Ruhnkenius* (1723-1798)

For determining the position of Ruhnkenius, who was a contemporary of Winckelmann (1719-1786) and Heyne (1729-1812) and a schoolmate of Kant (1724-1804), and to whom Wolf dedicated his *Prolegomena ad Homerum*, there are a number of sources. In the first place, Ruhnkenius' much-praised *Elogium Tib. Hemsterhusii* enables us to see Hemsterhuis' opinions through Ruhnkenius' eyes and thus to gauge the similarities and differences between the two. Next, we have Ruhnkenius' own public lectures – more specifically his *De Graecia artium ac doctrinarum inventrice* (1757) and *De doctore umbratico* (1761) – and, lastly, there is the *Vita Davidis Ruhnkenii* written by his successor Daniel Wyttenbach.

In his *Elogium*, Ruhnkenius describes Hemsterhuis as the *perfecti et omnibus numeris absoluti Critici imago*, a shining example and a beacon at a time in which classical philology was threatened as much by *temeritas et audacia* as by pettifogging and scholarly reclusion.

What strikes one in Ruhnkenius' description of the *provincia* of classical scholarship is that its *materia* is not only in fact but also in principle restricted to the *veterum scriptorum libri*, to the work of poets, orators, grammarians, historians and philosophers – in this order. Later on, it turns out that by the latter he in fact means *mathematici et philosophi*. With Hemsterhuis, Ruhnkenius at least verbally laments the

disintegration of what was still a coherent whole in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. How far he has actually become removed from Hemsterhuis becomes manifest when he goes on to explain that the study of *geometria* should primarily promote *acute cernere in literis nostris*, and that knowledge of astronomy is indispensable for understanding Virgil, Aratus and Manilius rather than modern scientific issues. In other words, Ruhnkenius reverses the priorities of Hemsterhuis: the true classicist will make himself familiar with other disciplines not for their own sake, but because they can help sharpen the intellect of the *criticus*, and because he may, now and then, need them to understand the ancient texts, which can tell him all that is really worth knowing.

We are even further removed from Hemsterhuis' ideals when Ruhnkenius motivates his admiration for Hemsterhuis by pointing out that he did not avoid the toughest of philosophical authors and therefore was able to compare Plato with Leibniz and Aristotle with Locke, so as to show that *omnia vera certaque* had been found as early as antiquity, and thus to demonstrate the *levitas et inconstantia* of the modern *metaphysici*. For Ruhnkenius himself, as Wyttenbach tells us, the pleasure and benefit ancient philosophy had to offer derived from *ratio et forma* rather than from *materia et argumentum*.

That neither Ruhnkenius nor his biographer indeed had any affinity with the philosophy of their own time is confirmed by Wyttenbach's contrasting Ruhnkenius, whom he praises for his lifelong fidelity to the preferences of his youth, with his schoolmate Kant, who in later life forsook philology and turned off to philosophy: *Sed Kantium sive casus, sive quidam ingenii aestus, ad Philosophiam detulit* (...) *Ruhnkenium, ut cum poeta loquar, quae puerum adspexerat Musa, eadem nunc senem reliquit: igitur hoc studium retinuit, indeque profectus, omnis Latinae Graecaeque elegantiae et rationem complexus est, et princeps exstitit.* It is difficult to appreciate the compliment apparently intended in Wyttenbach's description of Ruhnkenius as a man from a healthy past who was immune to the contagious diseases of his own time: *vir e singulari et maxime raro naturarum genere, quae immunes a sui saeculi contagione, integrae sinceraeque a prisci sanitate aevi prodeunt.* It must, however, be said that this kind of nostalgia for the 'healthy' spiritual climate of the past would turn out to have come to stay. To offer one instance out of many: in 1963, Schadewaldt's feeling "daß es irgendwie mit unserer Zeit eben doch nicht stimmt" made him hope that the Greeks could be made into "geistige

Nothelfer und Unheilswehrer, die nach dem alten Glauben gerade in Zeiten der Gefahr ihren Gräbern entsteigen."[6]

A third essential difference between the image of Hemsterhuis presented in Ruhnkenius' *Elogium* and the opinions he himself expressed can be found in the description of the conditions to be met by those deserving the illustrious title of *Criticus*. According to Ruhnkenius, the primary characteristics of the *criticus* are *ingenium et eruditio*. He puts much emphasis on his conviction that the *ingenium* of the *criticus* is essentially different from that of both poets and *mathematici*. The critic has to be able to quickly call to mind *imagines ante perceptae*, and should have at his disposal a *promta ac parata iudicandi subtilitas*. These are innate faculties, and more significant than *ars, disciplina* and even *eruditio*. The application of this to Hemsterhuis testifies to Ruhnkenius' own priorities rather than to his understanding of those of his predecessor, who emphasized the importance of method above genius and 'Fingerspitzengefühl'.

Ruhnkenius' assessment of the relative merits of antiquity and modern times is not nominally different from the consensus that had arisen from the first phase of the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes*. He deems antiquity superior in *disciplinis iis quae, ex apertis cognitisque fontibus hauriendae, sola ingenii sollertia perficiantur*, and modern times in *iis quae ex abditis naturae penetralibus observandi diurnitate et longa experimentorum eruantur serie*.

The underlying evaluation however appears to be completely different. Ruhnkenius' need to put antiquity *hors concours* is expressed in an attempt to pardon its limited achievements in a number of scientific areas: progress in science does after all take much time and requires tools and instruments that only became available later. Ruhnkenius bids his audience to realize how much the Greeks, despite the unfavourable conditions, have accomplished. Compared to that, modern achievements are hardly spectacular: they are due to the instruments available rather than to intelligence, and sheer luck and coincidence played a considerable part in them. After all, he says, it happens time and again, in physics, chemistry, astronomy or medicine, that what in many centuries has not been discovered by the brightest of men, is discovered with no effort whatsoever by a *bardus aliquis monachus, aut si quis est consimili stupore*. So the ancients, far from deserving our disdain, are to be greatly admired for their *sagacitas*,

---

[6] *Der Gott von Delphi und die Humanitätsidee*, Pforzheim 1963, 3.

thanks to which, in astronomy for instance, they were capable of conjecturing what modern astronomers have confirmed with the help of telescopes: *quae recentiores tuborum ope cognorint eadem tamquam divini rara et singulari ingenii vi conjecerunt.*

Statements such as these are symptomatic of the distance that separates Ruhnkenius both from Hemsterhuis and from contemporary science: it is, of course, preposterous – if not downright foolish – to identify the discoveries made by ancient philosophers with those of modern science, or to maintain that the progress made by Newton and his successors would be due less to *sollertia* than to sheer luck or coincidence. Likewise, it is difficult to sympathize with Ruhnkenius when he makes Archimedes the example of a scientist whose results may have been less spectacular, but who – unlike his modern colleagues – at least put them at the service of his country.

Not surprisingly, Ruhnkenius' respect for antiquity in those areas in which, to his opinion, human intellect can manage entirely on its own, is almost unlimited, albeit not expressed entirely without polemic background noises. In philosophy, according to Ruhnkenius, Plato and Aristotle are absolute milestones, and their results are preeminently *firma, certa* and *stabilia* – the latter in contrast to the eighteenth century which *cum conviciis et clamore* shows a new metaphysics every 40 years. He is happy to see that the preeminence of Aristotelian logic is again completely visible now that the nonsense invented by the *Scholastici et Stoici* (sic) only vegetates *in Jesuitarum monasteriis.* As for ethics: *illi ipsi qui hodie in Gallia praesertim et Brittannia, ut suum et aliorum otium fallant, nos libris de morum doctrina prope obruunt, quid magnopere afferunt quod in Socraticis libris non multo rectius atque elegantius tradatur?* – a rhetorical question the answer to which could well be a different one than Ruhnkenius had in mind, the more so if one realizes that Ruhnkenius went as far as ascribing the modern 'overrating' of Montesquieu, Hume, Kant and Rousseau to a lack of knowledge of Plato and Aristotle themselves. It would, however, seem that even Voltaire's provocative description of Plato as an 'eloquent babbler' does not mean that he was completely ignorant of Platonic philosophy. Perhaps the most remarkable element in this tirade is not just the absurdity of Ruhnkenius' statements as such, but more specifically the fact that he deems antiquity superior *en bloc* as it were. Plato and Aristotle *together* are considered superior to all that is modern, regardless of the differences between them. Ruhnkenius' contemporaries, apparently, were better equipped than he himself to appreciate the fundamental diffe-

rences between Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics and Epicure, precisely because they had freed themselves from blindly believing whatever had the aura of being ancient.

In the choice of his study objects, Ruhnkenius seems to have been guided solely by the requirements of his own profession: the Homeric Hymns to Demeter and Dionysus, the lexica of Timaeus and Hesychius, the scholia on Plato are only of interest to professional classicists. The same goes for his *Historia critica oratorum graecorum* (1768), which, despite its promising title, contains a critical examination of biographical data and *realia*, and has nothing to do with the spirit in which Valckenaer had spoken about the historical aspect of the study of antiquity.

As to method, Ruhnkenius differs from both Hemsterhuis and Valckenaer in that he primarily emphasizes the exceptional merits of the true *Criticus* by stressing the unique combination of innate characteristics, erudition and *savoir vivre* that distinguishes him from the scientists who work in less demanding fields – a combination that can only be successful with those who have a *divinum ingenium*, which, for that matter, will also enable them to hold their own in the drawing rooms of the elite.

Perhaps the most revealing testimony to Ruhnkenius' beliefs is his public oration *De doctore umbratico*, which makes embarrassingly clear what his real priorities were. He blames the loss of prestige of the *humaniora*, apart from on the indolence of his students and on their profit-seeking parents, on those of his colleagues who behave as scholarly recluses, who are out of touch with life itself, and whose manners and appearance make them into deterrents rather than into *exempla* of the civilizing effects of the study of antiquity. Ruhnkenius' description reminds one of Nietzsche's portrait of "die Philologen": "Die Hadesschatten des Homer – welcher Art von Existenz sind sie eigentlich nachgemalt? Ich glaube, es ist eine Beschreibung des Philologen. Es ist besser Tageslohner zu sein, als eine so blutlose Erinnerung an Vergangenes – Grosses und Kleines. (...) Wirkung auf Nicht-Philologen gleich Null."

The *umbratici* give themselves away by their contempt for contemporary achievements – a seeming inconsistency with what Ruhnkenius himself felt about the relative merits of antiquity and modern times, of which the actual intention becomes clear in its elaboration: the instances of what the *umbratici* reject are all taken from the seventeenth century: Bossuet, Fénélon, Racine and Corneille. He blames them for

neglecting the task of the *salonfähige* scholar: comparing the products of modern poets and orators with those of antiquity, in order to show how far the moderns can get by imitating the models of antiquity (*quam felici studio recentiores antiquos illos imitati sint*). They further damage the reputation of classical philology by reducing its *provincia* and by failing to pay attention to philosophy and mathematics – unlike Ruhnkenius himself who, as appears from Wyttenbach's biography, expressly attended lectures on these subjects "ita ut gustaret nec ignoraret."

The *umbratici* lack the experience of society and life that is required for understanding the great authors of yore. They compare unfavourably to the *mulierculae* Ruhnkenius met in the *salons* in Paris, whom he admired for their understanding of the psychology of the *dramatis personae* of tragedy, and to the young Bentinck counts who told him that they only had come to understand Horace once they had gained experience in conversing with the highly civilized rulers of this world.

The eloquence of his despised colleagues is *stultitia loquax* instead of *sapientia copiose loquens*, and makes their contemporaries lose sight of the superiority of classical civilization which *omnes artes liberali homine dignas invenit et cumulate perfecit*, and fully established human *virtus*.

Accordingly, Ruhnkenius, unlike Hemsterhuis and Valckenaer, attached great value to the cultivation of Latin according to strict, Ciceronian norms – which is remarkable both because it betrays that he, apparently, felt no need for a personal style and because, at the time, Latin had lost – and was still losing – a great deal of ground as the medium of communication between scholars.

Ruhnkenius' educational priorities strongly remind one of those of Plato's rival Isocrates. In his dreary and long-winded, but very influential *Antidosis*, Isocrates explains (261 ff.) that Plato's Academy vastly exaggerated the importance of mathematics, astronomy and similar μαθήματα. Although he does not share the belief of those who regard these subjects as nothing but matter for idle conversation and pettifogging, he is not prepared to follow Plato – whom he regards as an ἐριστικός rather than as a philosopher – in putting them into the centre of his programme of education. The study of mathematics and astronomy is of limited use in that it can help to develop the student's intellectual discipline, ability to concentrate, precision and patience. It is important to *learn* these subjects, but not to *have learnt* them.

The same goes for philosophy: it can have a modest preparatory function, but adult people who keep discussing abstract and incon-

sequential philosophical problems – such as the question of the number of Beings – will lose the capacity for participating in and influencing the life of the community, the more so since one cannot find any issue two philosophers would agree on: their very quarrelsomeness suffices to prove that the presumption that philosophy can provide undisputable knowledge has no ground whatsoever. A sensible and adult man realizes that it is a boon if the number of times one succeeds in achieving good practical results exceeds the number of one's failures. This quasi-modest goal can be attained if one acquires the ability to 'speak well' (*εὖ λέγειν*), wich implies the ability to 'think well' (*εὖ φρονεῖν*): this will earn one the kind of respect of one's fellow citizens which is the surest sign of real excellence and merit.

These beliefs are, of course, the source of inspiration of Cicero's ideal of the orator as a *vir bonus dicendi peritus*, which has remained an important ingredient of the ideology behind the education in the *humaniora* ever since. From the eighteenth century onwards, it was gradually watered down to the belief that competence in writing and translating (not: reading) Latin, and to a lesser degree, Greek, will ensure the student's ability to write, speak and think correctly in his own language. It would seem that it was the reluctance to give up this pretension that made Ruhnkenius (and Wolf) emphasize the importance of acquiring a good Latin style after the model of Cicero.

The dominating impression one is left with by all this is of an attempt to kill two birds with one stone: Ruhnkenius wants to regain the reputation and social esteem that, in former times, fell to those who have access to the treasures of ancient civilization, and, at the same time, to withdraw into an ivory tower, where he can devote himself undisturbed to scholarship, and to which instability and quasi-progress have no access. He seeks to draw a circle around himself and some select initiates who were prepared to adhere to principles that would ban any feeling of doubt regarding the intellectual, aesthetic and moral superiority of antiquity, and to reject modern science and philosophy as the delusions of those who take the mode of the day for progress, and who want to gain a vulnerable and short-lived reputation by conforming to those who have something to gain from change.

As far as I know, Ruhnkenius never discusses issues such as the American or French Revolution, but there can be little doubt that he will have condemned these as being the pernicious outcome of the very mentality that refused to acknowledge the superior excellence of antiquity.

Compared to Hemsterhuis and Valckenaer, the opinions and activities of Ruhnkenius do not even begin to pose, let alone answer, the pressing question whether and where some common ground can be found between the growing inclination to evaluate antiquity as just one historical period among many, and his own conviction that ancient civilization is to be considered the normative and stable foundation of European culture. He saw no better solution than to return to old positions and to ascribe the lack of respect for those who administered the splendid legacy of classical antiquity to the unsavoury habits of his uncivilized colleagues, and to the quarrelsome and reprehensible mentality of contemporary scientists and philosophers, against which the study of the *humaniora* was to provide a remedy.

5. *Gesner, Ernesti, Heyne*

In his *Geschichte des gelehrten Unterrichts*, F. Paulsen introduces Gesner as the saviour of the *studia humaniora* at a time when they were in danger of "durch die vereinigten Bestrebungen des Realismus und Pietismus für immer aus den Schulen verdrängt zu werden" (II, 15). Gesner's activity was aimed at a reorientation of the practice of education in the *humaniora* both at gymnasia and universities: instead of devoting their time to learning to write Latin by means of imitating ancient examples, the students should develop critical judgement, taste and insight, and the capacity for literary and scientific production in their own language. The primary reason for making the students familiar with the products of ancient, and especially of Greek, civilization is to bring them into contact "mit den grössten und edelsten Seelen die jemals gewesen," and thus to inspire them to develop themselves to the best of their ability. One is strongly reminded of Protagoras' description of traditional education in ancient Athens. (Plat. *Prot.* 326a)

In order to attain this goal it suffices that the students develop a good *reading* knowledge of Latin and Greek. In Gesner's view, it is unnecessary and even harmful to start the students' education with making them systematically memorize the complete grammar. For those who do not want to become classicists a short introductory grammar course will suffice: an overview of the most important facts of grammar will enable them to pick up what is necessary from what Gesner calls *kursorische Lektüre* of the texts. The contrasting *stata-*

rische Lektüre will make the student concentrate on grammar and syntax, rather than guide him towards the contents of what he is reading.[7]

The underlying didactic principle is that the teacher should systematically direct the students' attention to the 'what?', the 'why?' and the 'what for?' This will incite their interest and enhance their understanding: they will prove willing to memorize what they themselves have found to be indispensable for comprehending the text.

Gesner is remarkably outspoken in his belief that the lack of success of education in the *humaniora* should be blamed on the deficient training of the teachers. Universities educate theologians, jurists and classical scholars, but not good "Schulmänner." To change this situation, which, in his view, greatly damaged the reputation of the study of antiquity, Gesner organized the so-called *seminarium philologicum* at the university of Göttingen, which provided him with the possibility to offer nine participants at a time a both intensive and broad qualifying course for the teaching profession.

Another element with a strongly practical basis, is Gesner's advice to have part of the reading of Greek authors done with the help of readers (*chrestomathiae*). Apart from economic motives (with a substantial market texts can be made available relatively cheaply), a reader will provide the opportunity to introduce students to a variety of Greek authors. To Gesner, these *chrestomathiae* should not contain collections of highlights, but should bring together in one affordable book a number of larger, self-contained parts of texts, that have been selected for their suitability for the type of cursory reading he has in mind.

Gesner's attempts to give classical education a manageable shape and form that will meet contemporary needs are founded on a conviction that is as enthusiastic as the Latin it is clad in is dry and longwinded: each and every future university student will benefit from getting thoroughly acquainted with the great classical authors, who embody the norms by which ethical, aesthetic and scientific qualities are formed and measured.

So Gesner seeks to replace what was nominally indispensable, but in fact no longer functional, by something the function of which can be clearly described, but the irreplaceable nature of which, in prin-

[7] It is instructive to compare Gesner's views with those of Comenius, for which see Grafton 1997, 6.

ciple, remains as disputable as it was. The main difference between Ruhnkenius and Gesner seems to be that the latter is acutely aware that his preference for the Greeks as exemplary and inspiring predecessors requires a broad basis in the daily reality of gymnasium and university education. He refrains from blaming the distance between ideal and reality on the defects of others, but rather looks for ways to help provide a solid practical foundation for his ideals. If the practice he advocates seems modern to us, we should remember that the amount of time available for teaching Latin and Greek, in this period, was still so substantial that Gesner's *kursorische Lektüre* could be expected to have results that came close to what he aimed at: the sheer size of the texts included in his *Chrestomathiae* and his reports about the number of lessons available for reading Latin and Greek leave no doubt about that.

Gesner's main themes are continued by Ernesti, albeit with differences in emphasis. Ernesti's main goals are the linguistic, material and aesthetic understanding of a substantial number of ancient authors and the development of the student's ability to imitate them critically and tastefully and to obtain all kinds of useful knowledge. For Ernesti also, it is more important to understand Latin authors than to be able to write Latin: he is even prepared to contradict the time-honoured belief that the ability to do the latter will automatically guarantee the ability to do the first as well. Just like Gesner, Ernesti apparently still saw a market for an encyclopaedic summary in which school learning in the areas of mathematics, psychology, metaphysics, logics, theology, philosophy of law, ethics and physics is combined (*Initia doctrinae solidioris*, 1755).

Ernesti – whose own special interest was Cicero – differs from Gesner in that he puts slightly more emphasis on Latin, and advocates a somewhat more formalistic approach, primarily influenced by ancient rhetoric, and aimed at *imitatio* rather than at *aemulatio*, albeit both no longer in Latin but in German.

Both Gesner and Ernesti have had considerable influence, both through the number of their students (among whom many future *rectores gymnasii*), and through their having written influential *Schulordnungen* (Gesner wrote the one for Braunschweig-Lüneburg, 1737, and Ernesti the one for Sachsen, 1773).

5.1. We cannot ignore the activities of C.G. Heyne (1729-1812), who was a student of Ernesti and, on recommendation of Ruhnkenius, became Gesner's successor in Göttingen, where he was active for

almost fifty years. The limited scope of my argument prevents me from doing justice to his considerable significance to classical scholarship. It should, however, be said that he has earned the right to much more than a place in the shadow of Wolf, whose superior he was both because of the lasting influence of his stupendous learned activity and because of his ability to quietly imbue his numerous students with a renewed inspiration without crying from the rooftops that he had something new to offer. For him, the study of the *humaniora* seems to have almost completely lost its character of being a preparation or a foundation for other disciplines. Unlike Hemsterhuis, Ruhnkenius, Gesner and Ernesti, Heyne devoted much of his work and teaching to ancient poetry (Homer, Pindar, Tibull, Virgil) and the contribution it had to make to the general intellectual and aesthetic education of the *studiosus* who must be made sensitive to what is good, true and beautiful. He regards the knowledge and understanding of classical Greek literature as essential, not because tradition required it or because scientific progress would not be possible without it, but because he shared the preferences of Winckelmann, Schiller and Goethe, who felt attracted, in a new way, to ancient Greek art and to Homer, Pindar and Aeschylus – who, until then, although regarded nominally as great and unsurpassable examples, had been felt to be at odds with the norms of classicistic rhetoric and poetics as they had been defined in the days of Boileau.

Paulsen (II,35) justly compares Heyne's inspiring approach to Greek poetry to what Winckelmann did for the visual arts, and credits him for having helped to lift the study of antiquity out of the pedantic school atmosphere and to introduce it once again "in die Kreise der gebildeten Welt." His well-attended lectures and his editions were successful as a conscious attempt "das klassische Altertum in lebendige Beziehung zu den Bildungsbestrebungen der Gegenwart zu setzen," (Paulsen, II,30) and much of what Von Humboldt (1767-1835) and Friedrich (1772-1829) and August Schlegel (1767-1845), despite all their differences, have in common may be due to Heyne's teaching.

These observations may suffice to show that the eighteenth century, in Germany, unlike in the Netherlands, shows a renewed practical orientation which, of course, organically fits in the extensive discussion on educational goals and methods that was raging through Germany during this period. The representatives of this approach actively looked for ways to directly influence a rigid teaching practice

and thus create support for the continuing presence of the classical authors and works of art, both inside and outside the academic circles.

6. *German 'Neo-Hellenism'*

F.A. Wolf's *Darstellung der Altertumswissenschaft* (1807), which he dedicated to Goethe, is usually regarded as the symbolic or even actual beginning of the *Altertumswissenschaft* as an emancipated, coherent and organized scientific discipline in its own right. The new beginning coincides with the period in which classical and early-romantic German literature was strongly and decisively inspired by Greek poetry. In the sixties of the eighteenth century, Lessing (*Hamburgische Dramaturgie*) had questioned the old-fashioned and French-orientated classicism of contemporary German drama by having recourse to a new interpretation of Aristotle's *Poetics*, so as to show to his contemporaries that following the principles of ancient literary theory was not necessarily tantamount to slavish imitation of the artificial and sometimes frigid rhetoric of the French. Goethe's experiments with a kind of epic poetry that was fashioned after the Homeric model, and both his and Schiller's attempts at writing tragedies that would stand comparison with those of Euripides and Sophocles, had made ancient Greek literature respectable once more and had even put it at the centre of interest of the *gebildete Welt.* Many a classicist must have had high hopes when Wolf's learned *Prolegomena ad Homerum* turned out to have an immediate impact on Schiller and Goethe, and must have been thrilled by Schiller's glowing admiration for the 'naivity' of Homer (*Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, 1795), or by his *Die Götter Griechenlands* (1793), where he expressed his nostalgia for the poetic world of antiquity – when the sun was still a god rather than a fireball, and the earth was held in place by Zeus himself rather than by the law of gravity:

Da ihr noch die Welt regieret,
An der Freude leichtem Gängelband,
Selige Geschlechter noch geführet,
Schöne Wesen aus dem Fabelland!
Ach, da euer Wonnedienst noch glänzte,
Wie ganz anders, anders war es da!
Da man deine Tempel noch bekränzte,
Venus Amathusia!

Da der Dichtung zauberische Hülle
Sich noch lieblich um die Wahrheit wand -
Durch die Schöpfung floß da Lebensfülle,
Und was nie empfinden wird, empfand.
An der Liebe Busen sie zu drücken,
Gab man höhern Adel der Natur,
Alles wies den eingeweihten Blicken
Alles eines Gottes spur.

Wo jetzt nur, wie unsre Weisen sagen,
Seelenlos ein Feuerball sich dreht,
Lenkte damals seinen goldnen Wagen
Helios in stiller Majestät.
Diese Höhen füllten Oreaden,
Eine Dryas lebt' in jenem Baum,
Aus den Urnen lieblicher Najaden
Sprang der Ströme Silberschaum.

(...)

Müßig kehrten zu dem Dichterlande
Heim die Götter, unnütz einer Welt,
Die, entwachsen ihrem Gängelbande,
Sich durch eignes Schweben hält.

Ja, sie kehrten heim und alles Schöne,
Alles Hohe nahmen sie mit fort,
Alle Farben, alle Lebenstöne,
Und uns blieb nur das entseelte Wort.
Aus der Zeitflut weggerissen schweben
Sie gerettet auf des Pindus Höh'n,
Was unsterblich im Gesang soll leben
Muß im Leben untergeh'n.

There is no need to discuss here the question of the relation between the German quest for a cultural identity and the definition of a so-called German spirit by its affinity with the Greeks: I have little or nothing to add to the observations of Butler (1935) and Fuhrmann (1972). The question I do want to address can be symbolically summarized in the question of what made Wolf dedicate his *Prolegomena ad Homerum* (1795) to Ruhnkenius ("*D. Ruhnkenio, principi criticorum*"). Wilamowitz (p. 39) who – in line with his periodization – denied Ruhnkenius any understanding of the "grosse geistige Beweging" of which Wolf would

be the exponent, feels compelled to assume that this dedication implied some irony. It would, however, seem that irony is a rather unexpected weapon in the hands of the vain and rather aggressive Wolf. An explanation that is more probable, in my view, is that one should distinguish between Wolf's significance to academic philology and his alleged role as a mediator between the intellectual and artistic movements of his time and classical philology.

With regard to the question that is the focus of my argument, it strikes one that Wolf's *Darstellung* testifies to a remarkably old-fashioned classicistic attitude, that reminds one more than Wilamowitz can have liked of what can be found in Ruhnkenius, and that the arguments with which he seeks to substantiate the importance of the historical study of antiquity are as various as they are irreconcilable.

In commending the study of antiquity, Wolf concentrates on those elements he could hope would appeal to his contemporaries. He has manifest difficulties in explaining why the *Altertum* he wants to study has no place for Egyptians, Jews and Persians as *literarisch nicht cultivierte, nur civilisierte Völker* – a characteristic that does less than justice to Jewish and Persian literature – or in defending the Romans against the lack of the fresh originality he considers one of the most important characteristics of Greek civilization, whose history he deems equivalent to the development into *humanitas* as such. All in all, it seems that the unity of the *Altertumswissenschaft* is determined by what traditionally was the field of classical philology rather than by the requirements of the new research programme he stood for.

Another striking element is the way in which Wolf discusses the achievements and opportunities of his own time: he refers to himself and his contemporaries as "wir Spätlinge" – an expression that may seem to fit Schiller's nostalgia for the world of Homer, but in fact betrays a disdain for the achievements of the modern age that even Sir William Temple would have considered to be exaggerated. Wolf, even more so than Ruhnkenius, is inclined to smooth over the fact that not all products of antiquity meet the highest standards. He apparently wants to counter the reproach that, as a consequence of the new concept of *Altertumswissenschaft*, the scholar will have to occupy himself with uninspiring texts as the sources for historical research. He does so by pointing out that ancient mediocrity is preferable to modern mediocrity because the former at least emulates great examples, and thus achieves *noblesse*: what antiquity has to offer is therefore preferable to "neuere Arbeiten von gleichem Unverdienst."

Unlike Gesner and Ernesti, Wolf resembles Ruhnkenius in emphatically holding on to the belief that a good Latin style is an essential condition for a correct understanding at least of the Latin authors – with the addition 'at least' ("wenigstens") revealing that he realized, but did not want to accept the consequence that this would then also have to hold for Greek.

Most important however is the obvious tension that exists between an attitude towards antiquity that is essentially classicistic, and the consequences of making the study of antiquity into a branch of historiography. Reinhardt's (1962, 130 ff.) discussion of this fundamental antinomy makes it clear that neither the *Altertumswissenschaft* nor Werner Jaeger's so-called "Dritter Humanismus" have succeeded in reconciling the irreconcilable. So, understandably, Wolf has much difficulty in advocating a "geschichtliche Methode" of studying antiquity and at the same time motivating the entire enterprise of the *Altertumswissenschaft* with the *Epoptie oder Anschauung des Heiligsten* to which it leads because it provides a view of the *altertümliche Menschheit selbst*, which, he says, adds even to the most inconsequential fragment of a bad tragedian a lustre no modern poem, however beautiful, could parallel. In this context, it is significant that the religious metaphors do not only occur when the admiration for the object of study has to be expressed: classical scholarship itself is also referred to as a sacred temple to which only a true *studiosus* is granted access.

I can perhaps further clarify what I believe to have been Wolf's main inspiration by quoting Wilamowitz (*Reden und Vorträge*, 108) who comforts the classicist by observing that the very insignificance of the countless details that must be mastered and the unattractiveness of much one has to study "ist ein grosser Segen für unser sittliches Leben": when the scholar "von seiner kleinlichen Werkeltagsarbeit das Auge aufschlägt zu der Majestät der Wissenschaft, dann wird ihm zu Mute wie in der heiligen Stille sternheller Nacht." According to Wilamowitz, classical philology may well still have a practical function for jurists and theologians for instance, but without that it would still be self-sufficient: "Und wir Philologen? Hängt unser Leben und unsere Existenzberechtigung etwa an der Ausbildung der Lehrer?" (*Ibid.* 103). The fact that, over a century after Gesner, Wilamowitz' answer to this rhetorical question was an emphatic 'no', seems to confirm my description of Wolf's motivation: the new significance of Greek antiquity to leading contemporaries was gratefully welcomed as an opportunity for regaining the lost status of the classicist profession,

rather than as the foundation and source of inspiration of their scientific activity as such.

7. *Conclusion*

The above, being a somewhat haphazard selection of illustrative facts, cannot pretend to summarize the whole truth about the eighteenth century history of classical scholarship in its social context. However, in my opinion, facts such as the ones I have mentioned justify two assumptions:

(1) The eighteenth century should be credited with more significance in the history of classical scholarship than is ascribed to it in the schema described in the first part of this paper.

(2) It seems that those who have regarded Wolf's *Darstellung* as the starting point of the *Altertumswissenschaft* exaggerate the degree to which he opened up prospects that were truly new or represented a momentous change in the daily practice of classical philology. We should not underestimate the possibility that Wolf owes his place in the current paradigm of the history of classical scholarship to the fact that he had a well-developed sense of publicity: this made him eminently capable of seeing and exploiting the opportunities for recovering the battered status of classical scholars that were offered by the combination of (a) the rise of History as a scientific discipline in its own right, (b) the preference of Winckelmann, Lessing, Schiller, Goethe and the Schlegels for the Greeks, which, in turn, offered an opportunity for competing with the French-Italian tradition by downplaying the merits of the Romans and making the understanding of the Greeks the prerogative of the Germans as it were.

The so-called beginning of the *Altertumswissenschaft* seems to have been inspired less by the nostalgia for the Greeks themselves than by the nostalgia for the lost esteem of the university professors of classical philology. Accordingly, the change in the daily research and teaching practice of the scholars involved appears to have been much smaller than is suggested by the high-flown rhetoric of Wilamowitz. It is to be noted that many of those who, at the time, dominated the cultural scene in Germany, such as Lessing, Winckelmann, Goethe, Schiller, Hölderlin and even Von Humboldt, deliberately kept a certain distance from classical philology as it was practised at the universities.

The significance of Wolf's *Prolegomena ad Homerum* is not that it revolutionized the understanding of the *genesis* of *Iliad* and *Odyssey*:

many of Wolf's arguments had been anticipated by François Hédelin, Abbé d'Aubignac (1715: *Conjectures Académiques, Dissertation sur l'Iliade*), Giammbattista Vico (1730: *Della Discoverta del vero Omero*), Robert Wood and Bentley (*Remarks on the Discourse of Free-Thinking by Anthony Collins*, Ch. vii: "Take my word for it, poor Homer had never such aspiring thoughts. He wrote a sequel of songs and rhapsodies, to be sung by himself for small earnings and good cheer, at festivals and other days of merriment; the *Ilias* he made for men, and the *Odysseis* for the other sex. These loose songs were not collected together in the form of an epic poem till Pisistratus' time, above 500 years later."). By systematically using the evidence from the recently discovered A-scholia Wolf wanted to show that the editor of the *Iliad* should give up the hope of reconstructing Homer's original text. It may be true that Goethe and Herder were keenly interested in what he had to say about the genesis of the Homeric epics – Goethe being rather shocked, and Herder hailing the separate rhapsodies that preceded the *Iliad* as an instance of true poetry from a period when a naive *Volksseele* still had access to the rich sources of imagery that go with having immediate contact with nature itself. But it is equally true that Wolf's further work (on Plato, Demosthenes, Herodian, and Cicero, five of whose speeches he misjudged as spurious) attracted little or no attention even from his colleagues, and that what academic classical scholarship after him had to say about "die homerische Frage" raised little or no interest outside the academic world.

It would seem that the activities of Gesner and Ernesti for the renewal of *das humanistische Gymnasium* and the implementation of the concept of a university advocated by Von Humboldt (who had an outstanding knowledge of Greek literature) have done much more for the continued presence of the *humaniora* in German (and Dutch) education than the so-called Neo-Hellenism of Wolf. In this respect, it is relevant to note that the interest of students in Wolf's lectures in Berlin was fairly limited, and that, in 1816, I. Bekker felt that Lachmann had better not *habilitate* himself for Berlin, because his own *Seminar* attracted too few students as it was. Even Boeckh – whose *Encyclopädie und Methodologie* may indeed be termed the statute of a mature *Altertumswissenschaft* – felt he had to counter the students' lack of interest by making his lectures compulsory for non-classicists or even by introducing a compulsory *Staatsprüfung* in what he regarded essential for *all* students (Paulsen II,251).

We may conclude that Ruhnkenius and Wolf had much more in

common than is commonly believed, and that Wolf had many reasons for praising the quality of Ruhnkenius' scholarship, that was superior to his own. So there seems to be no need to invoke 'irony' to understand Wolf's reason for calling Ruhnkenius the *princeps criticorum*. He should, perhaps, have dedicated his *Prolegomena* to Heyne, whose claims to this title were much stronger, and whose 1802 edition of the *Iliad* (for which he used the *marginalia* in Bentley's copy) can be characterized as the masterwork that should have followed Wolf's rather grandiose *Prolegomena*. That Wolf did not do so betrays both his lack of generosity (he owed much to Heyne's work on Homer) and his lack of affinity with what Heyne had to offer.

This is, of course, not to say that the period of the *Altertumswissenschaft* does not mark an important point in the history of classical philology as such. But there seems to be no justification for the presumption that, only at the end of the eighteenth century, the study of classical antiquity was at last acknowledged to be a 'historical' subject by the scholars themselves, who thereby would have both restored its relevance for their contemporaries and made it into a respectable discipline in its own right. The classicistic pretensions of the man who has been credited with this feat suffice to show that he was less motivated by the lofty considerations ascribed to him than by his wish to make the most of the recent revival of interest in the Greeks for the purpose of restoring the lost prestige of the study of antiquity at universities.

The crux of the matter is that the lost position of the *humaniora* as the *conditio sine qua non* for all science and literature was bound to involve a loss of territory and status of classical philology, and that only the full acknowledgement of the irreversible change of perspective would have enabled classical scholarship to find its own organic and accepted, if comparatively modest, place in *aedibus doctrinarum*.

I cannot refrain from quoting once more Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, with its lapidary catalogue of reasons for what he sees as the undeserved prestige of the classicists of his time: "1. Aus Unwissenheit des sonstigen Altertums; 2. Aus einer falschen Idealisierung zur Humanitätsmenschheit überhaupt; 3. Aus Schulmeister-Dünkel; 4. Aus der traditionellen Bewunderung; 5. Aus Widerspruch gegen die christliche Kirche oder zur Stütze; 6. Aus dem Eindruck, den die Jahrhunderte lange Arbeit der Philologen gemacht hat: es muss sich doch om Goldbergwerke handeln, meint der Zuschauer; 7. Fertigkeiten und Wissen von dorther gelernt. Vorschule der Wissenschaft."

What makes Bentley exceptional is that, in spite of all his admiration for Horace or Virgil, he had enough confidence in what he himself had to offer as a scholar to make him energetically concentrate on the requirements of his own job as a responsible student of antiquity: he emphatically refused to have his priorities dictated by those who wanted to impress the High and Mighty rather than to find the truth. Those, however, who were unable to resign themselves to the fact that classical antiquity had ceased to be the epitome and supreme model of civilization for all times, apparently were prepared to enter into any alliance from which arguments could be derived for re-establishing their own position as the privileged guardians of the legacy of antiquity, with its treasures of truth and beauty.

Both the vicissitudes of classical philology in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century and the further history of the unholy alliance between the German and the Greek spirit[8] – which was broken up when, in the years between 1933 and 1945, it became manifest that being educated in the *humaniora* was no guarantee for *humanitas* – should make us think twice before accepting the evaluation implied in the periodization advocated by Wilamowitz and Pfeiffer.

[8] "Auf humanistischen Gymnasien hat etwas gelebt, im Stillen, das uns den Eintritt in die [national-sozialistische] Bewegung zur Selbstverständlichkeit gemacht hat." (Wolf Aly, *Volk im Werden* 3, 1935, 433, quoted by W. Ludwig, 'Die lateinischen Schulautoren' (*Mitteilungsblatt des Deutschen Altphilologenverbandes* 12, 1968, 1-12)

COBET

The name of Carel Gabriël Cobet, who held the Leiden chair of Greek[1] from 1848 until his death in 1883, and who was greatly admired during his lifetime and for a decade or so after his death, nowadays has lost much of its prestige.[2] The more or less unanimous evaluation of his life's work and scientific principles by those who are competent to judge implies that the tradition in which he worked had already outlived itself by the time he was at his apogee. This holds both for the conception of classical philology he stood for and for his methods in textual criticism.[3]

For Cobet, a classical scholar was first and foremost a grammarian and a textual critic. He seemed deaf to the calls of those who, with the help of the tools and methods of the historian, sought to recover, analyse and experience classical civilization as a whole in its historical development, and he regarded the *Altertumswissenschaft* as a castle in the air which for lack of sound philological foundations primarily served the personal ambition of its constructors. According to Cobet, only a limited number of texts from the classical Greek period deserve permanent attention and admiration on the part of later generations. Historical and archeological material only interested him insofar as it could support the interpretation of these classical texts. Freeing these masterworks from the damage that had been done to them by medieval scribes – whom he despised and, without exception, regarded as even more stupid than they were industrious – and restoring them to their original form, he considered both the most honourable and the most important task of the classical scholar.

In order to acquit oneself of this task in a responsible way, one needs first and foremost to familiarize oneself thoroughly, on the basis of personal observation, with the language and usage as well as with the idiosyncrasies of one's author. Anyone who, from fear of having to deal with innumerable minute details, avoids such concentrated observation, deprives himself of what is the one and only basis for

---

[1] From 1846 onwards, Cobet also taught the 'Romeinse Oudheden' (*Antiquitates Romanae*).

[2] Cf. Schouten 1964 and Kenney 1974, 117 ff. The following is an attempt to make the evaluations offered by these two authors more specific.

[3] Cf. Wilamowitz 1921, 40.

discovering and correcting textual corruptions with any degree of certainty. Lexicon and grammar offer either a forced systematization of linguistic phenomena or – just as bad – an uncritical compilation of everything that is found in the invariably defective manuscripts. They only serve those who shun the effort of reading and re-reading the texts themselves. For the rest, they block one's access to the characteristic idiom of the author: if the critic *in spe* has not intensively studied an author's work, he will never be able to recognize his individual voice as it were, and therefore will not be competent to pass judgement.

When constituting a text, the critic of course has to base himself on manuscripts. Here also, there is no 'short cut': the perusal of the manuscripts can only be fully successful if one's palaeographical knowledge has been acquired by laborious personal observation and experience: intimate familiarity with writing conventions, abbreviations and with the typology of common scribes' errors will in many cases enable one to reconstruct the original text.

The objections that have been made to Cobet's method of textual criticism mainly concern his refusal to carry out the selection of manuscripts according to the principles of the so-called *stemmatische Methode*. Cobet still earns respect for his familiarity with the idiom of the Greek authors, but he is criticized for not having acknowledged that the *recensio* is a separate and indispensable phase in the process of text constitution. In this respect also, he relied primarily on his own observation and judgement, fully confident that these would enable him to recognize and exploit the more promising manuscripts.

Cobet's procedure diverges widely from the principles associated with the name of Lachmann, who tried to determine the genetic relationship between *all* the surviving manuscripts, so as to identify – or reconstruct – the *archetypus*, their one common ancestor.[4]

The distinctive difference between this method and the one that prevailed earlier is in that the critical evaluation (*examinatio*) and, where needed, correction (*emendatio*) of the text do not have as their starting point the vulgate or one representative of the transmission, but the oldest traceable form of the text, which has either been preserved or can be reconstructed without the help of those sources that can be eliminated because they can be shown to be fully dependent on another source. Replacing the old piecemeal way of proceeding by a

---

[4] For the genesis of this method see Timpanaro 1963 (published in a supplemented and improved form in German translation in 1971) and Kenney 96 ff.

methodical and systematic assessment of the sources seemed to offer the prospect of complete and unassailable certainty, notably in those cases where the genealogical ordering of manuscripts provided the possibility of identifying a small number of witnesses which together made possible the reconstruction of one lost, common ancestor, which meant that one could make a leap in time back to a text form that was older than all those preserved in manuscripts.

In the admiration for the achievements of Lachmann in particular, Kenney justly recognizes a tone of almost aggressive triumph: in the words of his biographer Hertz,[5] Lachmann gained "den vollständigen Sieg methodisch geübter Kritik über alles unmethodische, wenn auch noch so geistreiche Tappen und Tasten an den alten Texten." It is remarkable that a similarly triumphant sound can also be heard from Cobet, albeit pertaining to the degree of certainty that went with the method he himself advocated. In his inaugural lecture[6] one can hear both contempt for those who burdened their text editions with large quantities of useless readings, and the hope that it might be possible to base the constitution of the texts of many authors on one or on very few manuscripts.[7] Cobet, however, emphasizes that, even if one has succeeded in reducing the immense amount of variants to the oldest core of transmission, the result will still be an extremely corrupt text: even the oldest and best manuscripts are full of errors a novice would be ashamed of. Already in antiquity readers complained about the bad state of their texts: if Theophrastus, in his time, no longer had at his disposal a faultless text of one of the works of his older contemporary Aristotle, the texts that reached the period when most *archetypi* were supposed to have been written cannot have been anything other than heavily corrupted. It therefore has relatively little effect if one succeeds in freeing the texts from the stupidities of medieval scribes. While acknowledging that a judicious use of carefully selected manuscripts can show the critic improvements which he, however well informed he may be, could not have thought of, Cobet still finds true and ultimate certainty to depend upon the critic's knowledge of language and idiom, which is to enable him to recognize and correct the corruptions in the tradition, once this has been freed from its medieval distortions.

[5] Cited by Kenney (108).

[6] *Oratio de arte interpretandi grammatices et critices fundamentis innixa primario philologi officio* (1847).

[7] *Oratio de arte*, 27.

That is why he praises Scaliger as the epitome of the perfect critic: on the basis of thorough knowledge of the language and of patient observation of the author's characteristic habits, Scaliger succeeded in recognizing with complete certainty the intentional and unintentional errors of scribes and to reconstruct the original, *sive ex antiquis membranis sive ex ingenio*. Insufficient knowledge of the type advocated here results in unnecessarily suspecting what is not corrupt or (which is what Cobet most reproaches his German colleagues for) wrongly trying to defend and preserve what is corrupt.[8]

In Cobet's view, his German colleagues grossly exaggerated the difficulties that come with the historical distance separating us from antiquity: the ancient authors are not aliens from a different planet. Differences of time and place do not prevent us from knowing and understanding those who were, after all, human beings such as we ourselves are. He deems it possible to achieve a degree of familiarity with the ancients that enables one to know *for sure* what an author at a certain place cannot, or what in view of his usual way of thinking and writing he must have written.[9]

Thus, the right method forces the critic to identify himself with the great classical authors. Doing so will both add to his moral edification and satisfy his need for scientific certainty, based on the love for the truth that should inspire him. Cobet fully subscribes to the warm words Ruhnkenius, in his life of Tiberius Hemsterhuis, had used to praise the activity of the critic: the Critic distinguishes the false from the true, the right and pure from what is wrong and corrupt.[10]

Cobet, then, is driven at least as much as Lachmann and his followers by the prospect of certainty that can be guaranteed by a strictly scientific method, but he finds it less in the systematic determination of dependency relations between manuscripts than in an extrapolation, based on the principle of *analogy*, of what is certain and known to what is unknown and corrupt. In order to protect himself against the reproach of unverifiable, intuitive guesswork, he is forced almost to deny the historical distance that separates him from his authors and moreover to postulate great regularity in their ways of thinking and formulating.

Because of the fact that the 'trend', and in some cases also the results, initially seemed to prove the advocates of the methodical *recensio* right, Cobet was subject to the reproach that he held on to an outdated

[8] *Ibid.* 22, 25. [9] *Ibid.* 29. [10] *Ibid.* 20.

method, and required a too rigorous consistency from his authors in particular: he felt he had to correct the text in places where a more historical approach, which helps one to account for what is unique or particular, would have proven the manuscript tradition right. In his perception, the transmitted text is wrong until the competent critic has tested and approved it. He reproached his adversaries for having insufficient philological knowledge and for being all too ready to believe that the text of the *archetypus* was the right one, even if it contained demonstrable errors. As a result, one rarely finds Cobet involved in an attempt to defend what has been transmitted, whereas some of his contemporaries tended to overdo their attempts at justifying the transmitted text, arguably inspired by their awareness of the distance that separated them from antiquity, rather than – as Cobet would have it – by the wish to prove the transmitted text right.

Evidence of Cobet's characteristic attitude can be found not only in the formal-rhetorical prose of his inaugural lecture, but also in his letters to Jacob Geel.[11] Cobet wrote these letters in the years 1840-45 when, between the completion of his studies and the start of his lectureship, the Royal Dutch Institute of Sciences, Literature and Fine Arts enabled him to make a long journey abroad, in order to collect material for S.T. Karsten's edition of Simplicius' *Commentarii* on Aristotle – a text which had not appeared in print since the *editio princeps* of 1529. The letters increase our insight both into Cobet's mentality and habitus and into the coincidences that reinforced his belief in his own principles of method.

In the first place, the young Cobet shows marks of his strong attachment to the Leiden tradition he comes from. He highly admires Scaliger, Valckenaer and Ruhnkenius, and his respect for his own professor Bake – who, likewise, had little sympathy for the German tradition – seems endless, although, in retrospect, Bake's contributions to classical philology do not seem to meet the high standard set by Valckenaer and Ruhnkenius. "What use would it be to me to spend time briefly visiting some of the German universities? No use indeed. What will I learn there that I cannot learn in Leiden? Nothing at all."[12] "As long as the spirit of Valckenaer and Ruhnkenius and the

---

[11] Edited by Fruin and Van der Mey 1891.

[12] "Wat zou het mij baten nog eenigen tijd vluchtig eenige Duitsche universiteiten te bekijken (...)? Immers niets hoegenaamd. Wat zullen zij mij leeren dat ik te Leiden niet leeren kan? Volstrekt niets", Venice, January 25, 1844.

solidity of most others survive, there is no need to travel to Germany to perfect oneself." "I am convinced in my very soul that I will profit from you [sc. Geel] and Professor Bake more than from Schneidewin, Ritschl, Boeckh, Emper, etc."[13]

He is proud that during the four years of his travels he has not met anyone who really influenced him and that he will return to Leiden exactly as he was when he left it.[14] His extreme loyalty to the circle he came from is understandable to the extent that the scholars he could meet in Paris and *a fortiori* in Italy perhaps deserved little respect. But his undisguised and chauvinistic disdain becomes totally incomprehensible where it concerns stars of the magnitude of Boeckh, Ritschl and Hermann, the more so since he seems to have been indifferent to the considerable differences of opinion and outlook between these scholars.

The above fits in harmoniously with Cobet's abhorrence of philosophy and of certain forms of poetry. The praise he frequently sings of the 'complete certainty' he feels is an attainable goal, is counterbalanced by his contempt for the metaphysical concoctions he loathed in Simplicius (and in Aristotle as explained by him), for the signs of Roman Catholic superstition he finds in Italy and for the 'idle talk' of German philosophers "which kills common sense: without it I live in a clear light (...); with these λῆροι λεπτότατοι a mist wraps around me which takes away my clear view and makes me feel drugged and seasick."[15]

With regard to poetry – at least to its more lofty types – also he admits with some degree of self-satisfaction that he lacks the feeling for it.[16] "But in those melic things I can find no solid ground: to me at least they are swamps and I would rather not go there. I can see some twinkling here and there, but all *certain knowledge* stops, partly, I suspect, because the poet himself did not know exactly what he was

---

[13] "Zolang de geest van Valckenaer en Ruhnkenius en de soliditeit van de meeste anderen zal blijven leven, behoeft men niet naar Duitschland te reizen om zich te volmaken". "Ik ben in de ziel overtuigd dat ik meer zal profiteren van U [sc. Geel] en Prof. Bake dan van Schneidewin, Ritschl, Boeckh, Emper enz." Venice, late February, 1844.

[14] Letter to Menzel, Venice, 27 November-1 December, 1844.

[15] "dat het gezond verstand vermoordt: zonder dat leef ik in een helder licht (...); met die λῆροι λεπτότατοι rijst er een mistige nevel om mij henen, die mij het vrije uitzicht beneemt en mij bedwelmt en zeeziek maakt", Venice, January 25, 1844.

[16] Sophocles is sometimes the exception. Cf. Schouten 184-185, but there are times when he finds his poetry ridiculous as well.

saying (...). I find the melic language full of weird strange things, that cloud and confuse the fixed, irrefutable rules about form, meaning and construction. These worthy poets who gave their artificial language whatever meaning they wanted, took little heed of all this and can therefore not have any authority in grammatical questions. Pindar may do whatever he feels is right in the language he himself fabricated, but no conclusion can be drawn from it."[17] "And truly, the drunken loftiness of Aeschylus and Pindar cannot provide any solid ground. Pindar fabricates his language all by himself and on his own account, and Aeschylus, like the old spinster said about Paul, can also say the weirdest things, and I would not want to be answerable for his orthodoxy (in sound grammar that is)."[18]

It appears that the limited applicability of Cobet's method of emendation to texts in which he discovered less regularity than in those of Lysias or Xenophon diminished his interest in – particularly lyric – poetry even further. Or should we say that he lacked the taste for lyric poetry (he did appreciate Homer) and silenced his classicist conscience by telling himself that the much-desired methodically founded certainty was unattainable in these authors? In any case, he finds an ally in Aristophanes: nothing pleases him more than the latter's parody of Aeschylus: "it may be a great heresy, but, let me confide in you, Aristophanes' parody of those τερετίσματα is what I like best to read in the Βάτραχοι: it comes straight from my heart."[19]

---

[17] "Maar in die melische dingen voel ik geen grond onder mijne voeten: het zijn voor mij althans moerassen en ik waag mij er liever niet in. Ik zie wel hier of daar iets flikkeren, maar alle *zeker weten* houdt op, gedeeltelijk, naar ik vermoed, omdat de poëet zelf niet volkomen zeker wist was hij zeide (...). Ik vind die melische taal vol rare vreemde zaken, die de vaste onwrikbare regels over vorm, betekenis en constructie der woorden benevelen en verwarren. De heeren poëten, die van die kunsttaal alles maakten wat zij wilden, bekommerden zich zeer weinig over dit alles, en kunnen dus niet de minste autoriteit hebben in grammaticale quaestiën. Pindarus mag in de taal, die hij zelf heeft gefabriceerd, alles doen wat hem goed dunkt, maar men kan er niet de minste conclusie uit trekken." Venice, March 20, 1844.

[18] "En waarlijk, de beschonkene verhevenheid van Aeschylus en Pindarus kunnen geen vasten grond onder de voeten zetten. Pindarus fabriceert eene taal op zijn eigen houtje en zijn eigene verantwoording, en Aeschylus kan, zoals die oude juffrouw zei van Paulus, tusschenbeide ook al heel raar uitvallen, zoodat ik niet voor zijne orthodoxie zou willen instaan (in gezonde grammatica wel te verstaan)". To Menzel, Venice, 27 November – 1 December, 1844.

[19] "het is misschien eene groote ketterij, maar ik zeg het U in vertrouwen, de parodie van Aristophanes van die τερετίσματα is hetgeen ik het liefste lees in de Βάτραχοι: dat is mij uit het hart gesproken", Venice, March 20, 1844.

It will be obvious that the kind of scientific certainty Cobet believed in, made it impossible for him to appreciate the fruits of the hey-day of German classical scholarship. His disregard for the historical character of the subject prevented him from having the right perspective on the accomplishments of great representatives of the *Altertumswissenschaft*, and his limited affinity with poetry made him blind to the merits of those who, like Boeckh, Hermann and Meineke, achieved lasting results for the texts of Pindar and the dramatic poets precisely by closely studying the formal characteristics of their poetry.

Moreover, Cobet was a classicist in the sense that he regarded all Greek written after Alexander the Great as completely uninteresting. Both in his inaugural lecture and in his rectorial address 'On the correct appreciation of ancient literature'[20] he argues fervently that the classical Attic texts owed their value to the fact that they were written by and for free citizens. What he considers the decline of civilization in the Hellenistic period, he ascribes to the loss of political freedom since the Macedonian rule: what was written after that period does not deserve the attention of free and civilized people. In his view, the reputation of classical philology has been seriously damaged by its becoming involved with the collection of all the *quisquiliae* that are needed for the reading of worthless texts from the period of decline. This did not, however, prevent him from frequently occupying himself with these scorned authors, albeit rarely without expressing his contempt. He pays most attention to those who wanted to imitate the classical Attic of the admired period: the very 'regularity' of their style allows the formulation of rules and makes their prose a promising playground for Cobet's red pencil. The study of the history, philosophy or archeology of this 'period of decline' *a fortiori* cannot interest him. For the limited extent to which he does concern himself with historiography, he only does so because he feels that man has remained the same throughout the ages, so that the study of history derives its very meaning from the applicability of the historian's observations to one's own time.

It is the narrow-mindedness of Cobet's convictions that most detracts from the respect one might have for him, the more so because it is so clearly inpired by his wish to restore the dwindling reputation of classicism in a way that would match his own character, education

[20] *Oratio de monumentis literarum veterum suo pretio aestimandis.* The address was held in 1863 and printed in the *Annales Academici* 1863-64 (Leiden 1868).

and talents. Both in his correspondence with Geel and his friend Menzel and in his rectorial address, he shows his affinity with Bake's guiding principle that one should first and foremost be one's own (*ut unusquisque suus sit*) and with Valckenaer's motto *αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ βασεῦμαι ἐμὰν ὁδόν*, which he felt was as applicable to the free Athenian citizens of the fifth century as to himself. The ironical-humane reaction of Geel to Menzel deserves to be quoted: "Our friend, who is stout and brave, so far has never before expressed himself quite *this* way. His small partialities belong to the solidity of his character, and to his independence: we should leave him in peace."[21]

An additional factor that may have influenced Cobet's activities and opinions could be that he apparently had an exceptional talent for actively learning foreign languages. His command of spoken and written Latin was proverbial. He was much appreciated by his students for not just dictating his lecture notes, but having a sufficient command of Latin to improvise and to vary and repeat the phrasing of what he had to say. Also, the short time it took him to learn to read and write Italian may well be called astonishing. One cannot escape feeling that his devotion to linguistic competence as the main foundation for a textual critic – and maybe even his preoccupation with the emendation of texts as such – had something to do with his natural aptitude for this kind of work.

As for Cobet's method of textual criticism, our judgement should be a balanced one. In the first instance, he appears to have been well aware of the possibility of tracing mutual relationships between manuscripts, and thus reducing the number of witnesses relevant to the constitution of the text. In this respect, his report made to the Royal Dutch Institute of Sciences, Literature and Fine Arts upon the completion of his study tour, pertaining to his investigation of the sources for Simplicius' text is illuminating: "For every codex I have first recorded the age, form and all other characteristics which could later serve to determine the mutual connections of these many documents with complete certainty and knowledge. Although one cannot deny that this determination of mutual relationships of the codices has been misused frequently, and that many alleged discoveries about the gradual genesis of the currently existing texts cannot pass the test of

[21] December 20, 1844: "Onze vriend, die flink is, heb ik nog nooit zoo voor den dag zien komen, (...) Zijne kleine eenzijdigheden behooren tot de vastheid van zijn karakter, en tot zijne zelfstandigheid: wij moeten hem daarmede in vrede laten."

unprejudiced judges and common sense, it is apparent that the majority of copies that can be found of some authors in the rich libraries across Europe were originally derived from a very small number of archetypi, sometimes from a single archetypus. The original manuscripts still survive in part, while others antedate the era of our oldest codices by a longer or shorter stretch of time. In the latter case, caution dictates that one should content oneself with an approximation, instead of using one's imagination as some of our neighbours do, in order to create an archetypus in which all variation and deviation should melt into an arbitrary and forced unity. In the first case, on the other hand, criticism has a solid ground and gains in clarity and simplicity by the rejection of those thousands of meaningless variants which appear to have originated from the ignorance and thoughtlessness of later scribes or from failed attempts made by incapable correctors, who flattered themselves they were able by an innocuous change to render comprehensible what they themselves did not comprehend."[22]

What is particularly striking in this passage is the plural 'archetypi' which does not fit in with Lachmann's definition of the concept. Another striking thing is that to Cobet, the tracing of relationships between manuscripts is useful mainly because it enables one to disregard many readings that were inferior anyway, rather than because it offers

[22] "Van iederen codex heb ik vóór alles den ouderdom, den vorm en al de overige kenmerken opgeteekend, die later strekken konden om de verwantschap dier talrijke documenten onderling met volkomene zekerheid en kennis te bepalen. Hoewel het niet te ontkennen is, dat men menigmaal van deze bepaling der onderlinge verwantschap der codices misbruik heeft gemaakt en gewaande ontdekkingen omtrent het trapsgewijze ontstaan der thans bestaande teksten te voorschijn gebracht heeft, die den toets van onbevooroordeelde rechters en eener gezonde critiek niet kunnen doorstaan, is het echter klaarblijkelijk, dat het overgroote aantal afschriften, die thans van sommige schrijvers in de rijke bibliotheken van Europa zijn verspreid, oorspronkelijk van een zeer klein getal archetypi, soms van eenen enkelen archetypus, zijn afgestamd. Die oorspronkelijke handschriften bestaan voor een deel nog, terwijl een ander gedeelte ervan het tijdperk onzer oudste codices meer of min verre overschrijdt. In dit laatste geval is het voorzichtig, zich met eene benadering te vergenoegen, in plaats van de verbeeldingskracht te hulp te roepen, zoals sommigen onzer naburen, en zich een archetypus te scheppen, waarin alle verschil en afwijking tot een willekeurige en gedwongen eenheid moet versmelten. In het eerste geval daarentegen staat de critiek op een vasten grond en wint in helderheid en eenvoudigheid door het verwerpen van die duizenden nietsbeduidende varianten, die dan klaar blijken ontstaan te zijn uit de onkunde en gedachteloosheid van latere afschrijvers of uit de mislukte pogingen van onbekwame corectors, die wat zij niet verstonden meenden door eene onschuldige verandering verstaanbaar te maken". Appendix 2 in the edition of the letters to Geel, 602 ff.

a secure foundation for the process of *examinatio*. Apart from that, the principles advocated in this quotation can certainly not be regarded as unsound, and one has to acknowledge that his criticism of those who would force an archetype at all costs, in many cases, is not unjustified.

The fact that Cobet saw an additional role for the distinction between *good* and *bad* codices seems at odds with these principles, which are in themselves reasonably sound. He regards as 'good' a manuscript that offers a better text than the vulgate (in the case of Simplicius the 1529 *editio princeps*). A good codex contains readings "that the critics could never have come up with or at least could never have adopted with sufficient certainty."[23] A 'bad' manuscript is one that only adds to the number of mistakes to be found in the vulgate.

At first sight then Cobet's behaviour is inconsistent. On the one hand he is willing to acknowledge that it is not the age or quality of a manuscript but its independence of other sources that determines its value for the constitution of the text. On the other hand, the distinction between dependent and independent witnesses cannot coexist with the distinction between good and bad sources. The introduction of the latter confuses the *recensio* (which text form is the oldest recoverable form?) with the *examinatio* (is the transmitted text the original one?). The actual result of this is that the criterion of usefulness of readings for constituting the text is applied before the systematic sifting of the material has shown which text form represents the oldest traceable transmission: the critic comes to a judgement about the correctness of the text before he knows which text form should be the subject of *examinatio*.

Strictly speaking, this confusion cannot be defended: it leads to one getting less certainty than would be attainable, and it increases one's inclination to correct texts that do not need correcting. There is however more to it. Since Cobet's days it has become depressingly clear that the reduction of source material by way of tracing genealogical relationships according to the stricter principles of the methodical *recensio* is in many cases just not feasible because, in practice, contamination between manuscripts is the rule rather than the exception. In numerous cases, therefore, there will be interference between the evaluation of textual variants and the attempt to determine the degree of dependency of the textual sources in an unprejudiced way.

---

[23] "die de critiek of nimmer had kunnen uitdenken of althans nimmer met voldoende zekerheid had kunnen opnemen", *Ibid.* 609.

In other words: Cobet's method may be disputable from a theoretical viewpoint, but the method advocated by his more fashionable contemporaries is so often useless that a healthy degree of pragmatism must prevent us from condemning Cobet's *modus operandi* as unscientific. The advice offered by West (43) – who tries to summarize the wisdom gained by bitter experience since Cobet's time – on how to use an 'open recension' is as follows:

"1. Whenever the manuscripts are at variance, make a note of the reading or readings that seem to be ancient and the manuscripts in which it or they appear.
2. Any manuscript that is the sole carrier of such readings is obviously indispensable. Adopt it.
3. Remove from the list all the readings for which the manuscripts just adopted may serve as sources (not just the readings that appear only in them).
4. See which manuscript contains the largest number of the remaining readings. Adopt it. Remove from the list all the readings it contains.
5. Repeat (4) until every ancient reading is accounted for."

It would be unreasonable to deny that here too one's evaluation of the age and value of textual variants plays a major role in one's choice of the sources to be used. If we define a 'good' manuscript as one that contains readings that "seem to be ancient" then it is clear that we should not exaggerate the discrepancy between the procedure recommended here and that of Cobet.

Cobet's practice becomes the more understandable when we realize what were his experiences during his study tour. His assignment was to collect material for the text of Simplicius. For the rest, he tried to make the most of his visits to Italian libraries by consulting and collating as many manuscripts as he could. As for Simplicius: the complicated character of the transmission of his work did not prevent Cobet from reducing the material as much as he could. In one case (*Commentarii De Anima*) he indeed discovered the archetype, and in all other cases he paid close attention to characteristics that allowed him to draw conclusions about the mutual relationship of his sources.

In addition, he studied the text of Athenaeus, where he was able to consult the original of the few manuscripts of the surviving parts of the text in Venice. In 1850, he published a complete edition of Diogenes Laertius. The textual transmission of this author is a typical case of an open recension: correct readings can be found in three manu-

scripts without the relation between these having been successfully reconstructed, let alone that they could be traced back to a single source.[24] In a case like this, Cobet's eclectic method is as natural as it is effective. All in all, the pragmatic method he advocated did not prevent him from drawing conclusions that compare reasonably well with current assessments.

In conclusion, the following can be said:

(1) The most important shortcoming one could ascribe to Cobet in retrospect is found in his severely limited conception of classical philology, which was inspired by his own idiosyncrasy and education, and prevented him from arriving at a just evaluation of the work of his German contemporaries.

(2) As a textual critic, Cobet may be reproached for paying too little attention to methods that were developed shortly before and during his lifetime. In retrospect it should however be said that the possibilities of this approach were exaggerated by many of his contemporaries: over a century of research on the subject has taught us that the state of transmission made procedures like those of Cobet in many cases reasonable, if not unavoidable. His intuition that, in matters of textual criticism, one should not give 'method' priority over painstakingly scrutinizing the often chaotic complexity of one's sources was justified by his results.

(3) A more serious matter is the fact that Cobet satisfied his need for indisputable certainty by postulating strict regularity in the thought and grammar of his authors, and by almost completely denying the historical distance that separated him from them. The shortcomings of his 'method' – and its extremely personal nature – can be felt most strongly if one acknowledges that neither the person Cobet nor his method of emendation were suitable for either classical poetry, or Hellenistic literature, where he considered the discovering and applying of grammatical rules a hopeless enterprise. However, in the texts that he did work on too, his *modus operandi* led to conjectures in cases where a more adequate approach would have proved the transmitted text correct. One cannot help feeling that – in spite of his repeated emphasis on the close attention to be paid to the idiom of each individual author – Cobet's natural inclination led him to teach himself the rules for correct Attic usage he then made his authors comply with. Partly for this reason he often trod the dangerous ground that awaits

[24] See H.S. Long's *Praefatio* to his Oxford edition (1964).

every textual critic: he can often be seen to correct the author rather than the transmitted text.

The highly fragmented nature of his activity corresponds with this. After producing the Diogenes text – which, for financial reasons, he had to complete extremely fast – he edited hardly any other complete texts.[25]

All in all, this leaves us with the picture of a man whose distrust of speculation and the high-flown and whose respect for the meticulous craft that does not shirk details, together with the good and bad sides of his specific talents, both guided and misguided him to a position from which he could influence the further history of his field only marginally. This, however, does not amount to a condemnation, because one can rightly maintain that his no-nonsense attitude in sticking to the knowledge of language and idiom as the first and primary condition for the interpretation of the most valuable texts could function as an antidote against those *Altertumswissenschaftler* and textual critics who perhaps all too firmly believed in the progress that would result from a sacrosanct 'method', and tended to blur the difference between first-rate and second-rate works. Over the decades of his career, Cobet's clear voice was heard by many colleagues both in his own country and abroad, and he was respected and – partly because of his clear and direct way of expressing himself – appreciated. Classical philology in Leiden was resoundingly vocal in his person.

When reproaching Cobet for his outdated classicism one should be aware that the form classicism took with him may indeed have been a different and apparently more conservative one than could be encountered elsewhere on the continent, and particularly in Germany, but that the distance that separated those who clad themselves in more modern outfits from the society they wanted to impress, was larger than appears at first sight. After all, a great exponent of the German *Altertumswissenschaft* like Boeckh complained of lecture halls being less well-filled than his reputation would justify – and Cobet's students were enthusiastic.

---

[25] For an overview of his work, see Schouten 129 ff.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Adam, J. & A.M., *Platonis Protagoras*, Cambridge 1893.

Albini, U., 'L'Alcesti di Euripide,' *Maia* n.s. 13 (1961) 3–29.

Allen, A.W., 'Solon's Prayer to the Muses,' *TAPhA* 80 (1949) 50–65.

Arends, J.F.M., *Die Einheit der Polis*, Leiden 1988.

Beloch, K.J., *Griechische Geschichte*, Strassburg ^{2}1912–1927.

Bengtson, H., *Griechische Geschichte*, Munich ^{3}1965.

Bischoff, H., *Der Warner bei Herodot*, diss. Marburg 1932 (reprinted in: W. Marg [ed.], *Herodot: Eine Auswahl aus der neueren Forschung*, Darmstadt 1962, 302–19).

Boeckh, A., *Enzyklopädie und Methodenlehre der philologischen Wissenschaften*, ed. E. Bratuschek, Leipzig 1877.

Boer, W. den, 'Herodotus in het moderne onderzoek,' *Tijdschrift voor Geschiedenis* 83 (1970) 503 ff.

Bornitz, H.F., *Herodotstudien*, Berlin 1968.

Bowersock, G.W., 'Pseudo-Xenophon,' *HSCPh* 71 (1966) 33–55.

—— (ed.), *Xenophon, Scripta Minora*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1968 (Loeb).

Bowra, C.M., *Sophoclean Tragedy*, Oxford ^{2}1945.

Breebaart, A.B., 'Plutarch and the Political Development of Pericles,' *Mnemosyne* 24 (1971) 260–72.

Bugh, G.R., *The Horsemen of Athens*, Princeton 1988.

Burke, E.M., 'Athens after the Peloponnesian War: Restoration Efforts and the Role of Maritime Commerce,' *Classical Antiquity* 9 (1990) 1–13.

Burke, E.M., 'The Economy of Athens in the Classical Era: Some Adjustments to the Primitivist Model,' *TAPhA* 122 (1992) 199–226.

Bury, J.B., *A History of Greece*, London ^{3}1952.

Butler, E.M., *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany*, Cambridge 1935.

Carrière, J., 'Ambiguïté et vraisemblance dans *Œdipe-Roi*,' *Pallas* 4 (1956) 5–14.

Cogan, M., *The Human Thing: The Speeches and Principles of Thucydides' History*, Chicago 1981.

Conacher, D.J., *Euripidean Drama: Myth, Theme and Structure*, Toronto 1967.

Cornford, F.M., *Thucydides Mythistoricus*, London 1907.

Coulon, V. & H. Van Daele, *Aristophane, Les Guêpes, La Paix*, Paris 1948.

Crane, G., 'The Fear and Pursuit of Risk,' *TAPhA* 122 (1992) 227–55.

Croiset, A. & M., *Histoire de la littérature grecque*, Paris $^{3-4}$1928–1947.

Dale, A.M., *Euripides, Alcestis*, Oxford ^{2}1961.

Denniston, J.D., *Greek Prose Style*, Oxford 1952.

Dijksterhuis, E.J., *The Mechanization of the World Picture*, Oxford 1961.

Dover, K.J., *Greek Popular Morality*, Berkeley 1974.

Drexler, H., 'Die Teiresiasszene des "König Oedipus",' *Maia* n.s. 8 (1956) 1–26.

Ebeling, H.L., 'The Admetus of Euripides viewed in Relation to the Admetus of Tradition,' *TAPhA* 29 (1898) 65–85.
Else, G., 'Imitation in the Fifth Century,' *Classical Philology* 111 (1958), 73–90.
——, *Aristotle's Poetics: The Argument*, Leiden 1957.
Erbse, H., 'Der erste Satz im Werke Herodots,' *Festschrift Bruno Snell*, Munich 1956, 209–22.
Erp Taalman Kip, A. Maria van, 'De omstreden interpretatie van Sophocles' *Electra*,' *Lampas* 26 (1993) 4–21.

Fehling, D., *Die Quellenangaben bei Herodot: Studien zur Erzählkunst Herodots*, Berlin 1971.
Finley, M.I., 'Land, Debt and the Man of Property in Classical Athens' in: B.D. Shaw & R.P. Saller (eds.), *Economy and Society in Ancient Greece*, New York 1981.
Flashar, H., 'Der Epitaphios des Perikles: Seine Funktion im Geschichtswerk des Thukydides,' *Sitzungsber. Heidelb. Akad. d. Wiss.* 1969, 1–46.
Fornara, C.W., *Herodotus: An Interpretative Essay*, London 1971.
Forrest, W.G., *The Emergence of Greek Democracy*, London 1966.
Fränkel, H., *Wege und Formen frühgriechischen Denkens*, Munich 1960.
——, *Dichtung und Philosophie des frühen Griechentums*, Munich 1962.
Friedemann, F.T., *Davidis Ruhnkenii Orationes, Dissertationes et Epistulae*, Brunswick 1828.
Fritz, K. von, 'Die Entwicklung der Jason-Medea-Sage und die Medea des Euripides,' *Antike und Abendland* 8 (1959) 33–106 (reprinted in: *Antike und moderne Tragödie*, Berlin 1962, 322 ff.).
——, 'Euripides' *Alkestis* und ihre modernen Nachahmer und Kritiker,' *Antike und Abendland* 5 (1956) 27–70. (reprinted in: *Antike und moderne Tragödie*, Berlin 1962, 256 ff.).
——, 'Die Bedeutung des Aristoteles für die Geschichtsschreibung,' *Entretiens sur l'Antiquité Classique* IV, Geneva 1956, 85–128.
——, *Die Griechische Geschichtsschreibung*, Berlin 1967.
——, *Schriften zur griechischen Logik*, I: *Logik und Erkenntnistheorie*, Stuttgart 1978.
Fruin, R. & H.W. van der Mey (eds.), *Brieven van Cobet aan Geel uit Parijs en Italië (nov. 1840–juli 1845)*, Leiden 1891.
Fuhrmann, M., 'Winckelmann, ein deutsches Symbol,' *Neue Rundschau* 83 (1972) 265 ff.

Garzya, A., 'Il motivo della salvazione nell'*Alcesti* di Euripide,' *Le Parole e le Idee* 3 (1961), 6–14.
Geffcken, J., *Griechische Literaturgeschichte*, Heidelberg 1926–1934.
Georgiades, T., *Musik und Rhythmus bei den Griechen*, Hamburg 1958.
Gerretzen, J.G., *Schola Hemsterhusiana: De herleving der Grieksche studiën aan de Nederlandse universiteiten*, Nijmegen & Utrecht 1940.
Gigon, O., 'Studien zu Platons Protagoras,' in: *Phyllobolia für Peter von der Mühll*, Basel 1945, 91–152.
Glotz, G., *Histoire Ancienne*, vol. II: *Histoire grecque*, Paris 1925–1938.
Gomme, A.W., 'The Speeches in Thucydides,' in: *Essays in Greek History and Literature*, Oxford 1937, 156–89.

——, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, vols. I & II, Oxford ²1959 & 1956.
Grafton, A., *Defenders of the Text*, Cambridge (Mass.) & London 1991.
——, *Commerce with the Classics*, Ann Arbor 1997.
Groningen, B.A. van, *In the Grip of the Past*, Leiden 1953.
——, *La composition littéraire archaique grecque*, Amsterdam 1958.
——, *Theognis*, Amsterdam 1966.
Gundert, H., 'Die Simonides-Interpretation in Platons *Protagoras*,' in: *Ermeneia, Festschrift Otto Regenbogen*, Munich 1952, 70–93.
Guthrie, W.K.C., *History of Greek Philosophy* III, IV, Cambridge 1969, 1975.

Hanson, V.D., *Warfare and Agriculture in Ancient Greece*, Pisa 1983.
Heirman, L.J.R., *Plutarchus, 'De Audiendis Poetis,'* diss. Leiden 1972.
Hesseling, D.C, 'Euripides' Alcestis en de Volkspoëzie,' *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Academie van Wetenschappen*, 4th Series nr. xii, Amsterdam 1914, 1–27.
Highet, G., *The Classical Tradition*, Oxford ³1953.
Hirsch, E.D., *Validity in Interpretation*, New Haven & London 1967.
Hornblower, S., *A Commentary on Thucydides*, vol. I, Oxford 1991.
——, *Thucydides*, London 1987.
Huijing, E.G.P. & M. van Raalte, 'Theognidea 197–208,' *Lampas* 14 (1981) 5–16.
Hulshoff Pol, E., *Studia Ruhnkeniana*, Leiden 1953.
Huss, B., 'Der Homo-Mensura-Satz des Protagoras: Ein Forschungsbericht,' *Gymnasium* 103 (1996) 229–57.

Immerwahr, H.R., 'Pathology of Power and the Speeches in Thucydides,' in: P.A. Stadter (ed.), *The Speeches in Thucydides*, Chapel Hill 1973, 16–31.
——, *Form and Thought in Herodotus*, Cleveland 1966.

Jacoby, F., 'Herodotos,' *RE* Suppl. II, 205–50 (reprinted in: *Griechische Historiker*, Stuttgart 1956, 7–164).
Jameson, M., 'Famine in the Greek World,' in: P. Garnsey & C.R. Whittaker (eds.), *Trade and Famine in Classical Antiquity*, Cambridge 1983, 6–16.

Kagan, D., *The Archidamian War*, Ithaca & London 1974.
Kahn, C.H., 'Plato's Funeral Oration: the Motive of the *Menexenus*,' *CPh* 58 (1963) 220–34.
——, 'The Origins of Social Contract Theory in the Fifth Century B.C.,' in: G.B. Kerferd (ed.), *The Sophists and their Legacy*, Stuttgart 1981, 92–108.
——, *Plato and the Socratic Dialogue: The Philosophical Use of a Literary Form*, Cambridge 1996.
Kaibel, G., *Sophokles, Electra*, Stuttgart 1896 (reprinted *ibid.* 1967).
Kakridis, J.T., *Der thukydideische Epitaphios*, Munich 1961.
Kamerbeek, J.C., *The Plays of Sophocles*, Part V, *The Electra*, Leiden 1974.
Kenney, E.J., *The Classical Text*, Berkeley 1974.
Kerferd, G.B., art. 'Protagoras' in: P. Edwards (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, London & New York 1967.
——, *The Sophistic Movement*, Cambridge 1981.
Kirk G.S. & J.E. Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers*, Cambridge 1962.

Kitto, H.D.F., *Greek Tragedy*, London ³1966.
Knox, B.M.W., 'The *Medea* of Euripides,' *Yale Classical Studies* 25 (1977) 193–225.
——, 'Solon,' in: P.E. Easterling & B.M.W. Knox (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature*, vol. I: *Greek Literature*, Cambridge 1985, 46–52 (= ²1989, pt. 1, 105–12).
Koller, H., *Die Mimesis in der Antike*, Bern 1954.
Kranz, W., *Stasimon*, Berlin 1933.

Latte, K., 'Die Anfänge der griechischen Geschichtsschreibung,' in: *Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique* IV, Geneva 1958, 3–37.
Lattimore, R., 'The First Elegy of Solon,' *AJPh* 68 (1947) 161–79.
Ledger, G.R., *Re-counting Plato: A Computer Analysis of Plato's Style*, Oxford 1989.
Leeuwen Jf., J. van, *Aristophanis Pax*, Leiden 1906.
Lennep, A.D. van, *Euripides, Selected Plays*, vol. I: *Alcestis*, Leiden 1949.
Lesky, A., 'Alkestis: Der Mythus und das Drama,' *Sitzungsber. Akad. Wien, phil.-hist. Kl.* 202/3, Vienna 1925.
——, 'Der Angeklagte Admet,' *Maske und Kothurn* 10 (1964) 203 ff.
——, *Die Tragische Dichtung der Hellenen*, Göttingen 1956, ³1972.
——, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*, Bern ²1963.
Loraux, N., *L'invention d'Athènes: Histoire de l'oraison funèbre dans la 'cité classique'*, Paris 1981.
Luschnat, O., 'Thukydides der Historiker,' *RE* Suppl. XII, 1086–1355 (Sonderdruck Stuttgart 1971).

Maas, P., *Textkritik*, Leipzig 1927.
Mansfeld, J., 'Protagoras on Epistemological Obstacles and Persons,' in: G.B. Kerferd (ed.), *The Sophists and their Legacy*, Stuttgart 1981, 38–53.
Meyer, Ed., *Geschichte des Altertums*, vol. IV, Stuttgart ³1939.
Mill, J.S. (a), 'Notes on Some of the More Popular Dialogues of Plato,' in: J.M. Robson (ed.), *Essays on Philosophy and the Classics*, Toronto 1978.
—— (b), 'Utilitarianism,' in: *Utilitarianism, On Liberty, Essay on Bentham*, edited with an introduction by Mary Warnock, London 1986.
Momigliano, A., 'Herodotus in the History of Historiography,' in: *Studies in Historiography*, London 1965, 127 ff.
Müller, Luc., *Geschichte der klassischen Philologie in den Niederlanden*, Leipzig 1869.
Murray, G., *Euripides and his Age*, Oxford 1918.
——, *Aristophanes*, Oxford 1933.

Nilsson, M.P., *Geschichte der griechischen Religion*, vol. I, Munich ²1955.
Norwood, G., *Greek Comedy*, London 1931.
Nuchelmans, J.C.F., *Thucydides Pathologôn*, Nijmegen 1985.

Overbeck, J., *Die antiken Schriftquellen zur Geschichte der bildenden Kunst*, Leipzig 1868.

Page, D.L., *Euripides, Medea*, Oxford ²1952.
——, *The Homeric Odyssey*, Oxford 1955.
Pasquali, G., *Storia della tradizione e critica del testo*, Florence 1952.

Passmore, J., art. 'Richard Cumberland,' in: P. Edwards (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, London & New York 1967.
Paulsen, F., *Geschichte des gelehrten Unterrichts auf den deutschen Schulen und Universitäten*, vols. I–II, Leipzig ³1919–1921.
Pfeiffer, R., *History of Classical Scholarship from 1300–1850*, Oxford 1976.
Platnauer, M., *Aristophanes, Peace*, Oxford 1964.
Pohlenz, M., *Griechische Tragödie*, Leipzig & Berlin 1930.
——, *Herodot*, Leipzig 1937.
Proctor, D., *The Experience of Thucydides*, Warminster 1980.

Raalte, M. van, '*ὁ ἐρρωμενέστατος λόγος*: Betekenis en functie van de 'mythe' aan het einde van Plato's *Gorgias*,' *Lampas* 24 (1991) 306–30.
Radt, S.L., 'Aristoteles und die Tragödie,' *Mnemosyne* 24 (1971) 189–205.
Reeve, M.D., 'Euripides, *Medea* 1021–1080,' *CQ* 22 (1972) 51–61.
Reinhardt, K., 'Die klassische Philologie und das Klassische,' in: *Die Krise des Helden: Beiträge zur Literatur und Geistesgeschichte*, Munich 1962, 115–43.
Reutern, G. von, *Plutarchs Stellung zur Dichtkunst*, diss. Kiel 1933.
Ridley, M., *The Origins of Virtue*, Harmondsworth 1996.
Romilly, J. de, *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism*, Oxford 1963 (transl. of: *Thucydide et l'Impérialisme athénien*, Paris ²1951).
Rosenmeyer, T.G., *The Masks of Tragedy*, Austin 1963.
Ruhnkenius, D., *Elogium Tiberii Hemsterhusii auctore Davide Ruhnkenio* (...) *Vita Davidis Ruhnkenii, auctore Daniele Wyttenbachio*, ed. J.T. Bergman, Leiden & Amsterdam 1824.
—— (ed.), *Tiberii Hemsterhusii Orationes et Epistulae*, Leiden 1839.
Rutherford, R.B., *The Art of Plato*, Cambridge (Mass.) 1995.
——, *Homer*, Oxford 1996.

Sanctis, G. de, *Problemi di storia antica*, Bari 1932.
Sandys, J.E., *A History of Classical Scholarship*, vol. II, Cambridge 1908.
Schein, S.L. (ed.), *Reading the Odyssey: Selected Interpretive Essays*, Princeton 1996.
Schenkeveld, D.M., 'The Structure of Plutarch's *De Audiendis Poetis*,' *Mnemosyne* 35 (1982) 60–71.
Schmid, W. & O. Stählin, *Geschichte der griechischen Literatur*, vol. I, 4, Munich 1946.
Schönewolf, H., *Der jungattische Dithyrambus*, diss. Giessen 1938.
Schouten, D.J., *Het Grieks aan de Nederlandse Universiteiten in de negentiende eeuw*, diss. Nijmegen 1964.
Seeger, L. & O. Weinreich, *Aristophanes, Sämtliche Komödien*, vol. I, Zürich 1952.
Sicking, C.M.J., *Aristophanes' Ranae*, Assen 1962 (diss. Leiden).
——, *Griechische Verslehre*, Munich 1993.
Sörbom, G., *Mimesis and Art*, Uppsala 1966.
Stadter, P.A., 'Thucydidean Orators in Plutarch,' in: id. (ed.), *The Speeches in Thucydides*, Chapel Hill 1973.
——, *A Commentary on Plutarch's Pericles*, Chapel Hill 1989.
Starr, Ch., 'Thucydides on Sea Power,' *Mnemosyne* 31 (1978) 344–51.
Sullivan, J.P., 'The Hedonism in Plato's *Protagoras*,' *Phronesis* 6 (1961) 10–28.

Taylor, C.C.W., *Plato, Protagoras*, translated with notes by C.C.W.T., Oxford ²1991.
Timpanaro, S., *La genesi del metodo del Lachmann*, Florence 1963.

Verdenius, W.J., *Mimesis: Plato's Doctrine of Artistic Imitation*, Leiden 1949.
Verdin, H., *De historisch-kritische methode van Herodotus*, Brussels 1971.
Vlastos, G. (ed.), *Plato's Protagoras*, Jowett's translation revised by M. Ostwald, with an introduction by G.V., New York 1956.
——, *Socrates, Ironist and Moral Philosopher*, Cambridge 1991.

Weinreich, O., see: Seeger, L. & O. Weinreich.
West, M.L., *Textual Criticism and Editorial Technique*, Stuttgart 1973.
White, R.J., *Dr. Bentley, A Study in Academic Scarlet*, London 1965.
Wilamowitz Moellendorff, T. von, *Die dramatische Technik des Sophokles*, Berlin 1917.
Wilamowitz Moellendorff, U. von, *Reden und Vorträge*, Berlin 1902.
——, *Sappho und Simonides*, Berlin 1913.
——, *Platon*, vol. I, Berlin 1920.
——, *Geschichte der Philologie*, Leipzig 1921.
Wilcken, U. *Griechische Geschichte*, Munich 1962.
Williams, B., *Shame and Necessity*, Berkeley 1993.
Wolf, F.A., 'Darstellung der Altertumswissenschaft,' *Museum der Altertumswissenschaft* 1 (1807) 1–145.
Woodhead, A.G., *Thucydides on the Nature of Power*, Harvard 1970.
Woodruff, P., 'Plato's Early Theory of Knowledge,' in: S. Everson (ed.), *Epistemology*, Cambridge 1990, 60–84.

Young, D.C., *Three Odes of Pindar*, Leiden 1968.

Zürcher, W., *Die Darstellung des Menschen im Drama des Euripides*, Basel 1947.

INDEX LOCORUM

Aeschylus
Choephoroe
563: 86

Alcidamas
De soph.
27: 90
32: 90

Anaxagoras
VS B 1: 173

Aristophanes
Acharnians
509 ff.: 122, n. 28
Clouds
1371 ff.: 92
1430: 86
Frogs
1041: 87
Peace
68: 80
93: 82
197: 80
204: 80
511: 82
538–539: 82
752–760: 81
868: 82
Hypothesis: 81
Plutus
290 ff.: 89
Thesmophoriazusae
850: 86
155: 89
Wasps
1030–1037: 81

Aristotle
Metaphysics
1106a1 ff.: 180–181
Poetics
1447b18: 105
1448a1 ff.: 43
1448b8 ff.: 108
1450a21 ff.: 41, 98
1451a34 ff.: 43, 105
1451a36–b32: 147–149
1451b7 ff.: 158
1451b30–1: 149
1452a4: 40, 110, 149
1453a30 ff.: 40, 43
1454a22: 42
1455a24–26: 99
1455a32 ff.: 99
1460a27: 155
Rhetoric
1365a31–2: 140, n. 58
1411a2–3: 140, n. 58

ps. Aristotle
Problemata 918b: 89

Cicero
Ad familiares
V.12: 159–160, 164
De legibus
I.5: 165

Damon
VS 37 B 6: 95

Democritus
VS 55 B 154: 87

Demosthenes
LX.1: 116

Diogenes Laertius
II.106: 189, n. 15
IX.53 ff.: 170
X.52: 195, n. 31

Dionysius Hal.
De comp. verb.
85 UR: 89
De Thucydide
18 (351,18 ff. UR): 114
45 (401,17 ff. UR): 134
15 (347,15 ff. UR): 159

Euripides
Alcestis
10: 58
145: 58
152–155: 53, 59
174–182: 56
180: 58
202: 58
246–247: 57
250: 58
275: 58
280–325: 55
282–289: 55
290: 58
291–294: 51
305: 57
367–368: 57
373: 57
605: 58
614–616: 53, 59
619–629: 53
627–628: 59
636–637: 52
658–659: 58
662 ff.: 52
680–682: 52
689–690: 52
691–693: 51
726: 57
785: 60
789–790: 60
799–802: 60
940: 58, 59

955–957: 59
961: 59
1058: 58
1083: 61
1096: 58
1131: 61
1148: 58, 61
1158: 50
Electra
1035: 86
Hippolytus
612: 205
Hecuba
836: 87
Medea
11–45: 64–65
44–45: 67, 68
97: 67
145–147: 67
226–227: 67
236: 67
243: 67
265–266: 67
383: 68
404–406: 68
415–416: 68
448–9: 70
459: 70
466–472: 70
483: 70
489: 71
503: 70
514: 71
537–538: 71
568: 71
587–588: 71
602: 71
692–698: 69
724: 69
738: 69
744: 69
755: 69
765–766: 68
767: 68
797: 68
802: 68
810: 68–69
815–819: 69
823: 66
849: 70
869–975: 72
882–883: 72
921–922: 72–73
972–973: 73
1041–1050: 73–4
1127–1128: 74
1135: 74
1232: 74
1239–1246: 74
1250: 76
1304: 74
1333: 74
1343: 74
1355: 75
1362: 75
1372: 75
1380: 75
1384–1385: 75

Gorgias
Helen 9: 90

Heraclitus
VS 22B10: 87

Herodotus
I, beginning: 150
I.6–49: 153
I.30ff.: 155
II.78: 86
III.134: 155
IV.166: 86
VII.5–19: 153
VII–IX: 153

Hippocrates
De Victu
I.11: 87
De arte
VI,4: 174, n. 18

Homer
Σ 548–549: 87
Ψ 14: 88

Hyperides
VI.2: 116

Isocrates
I.11: 87
IV.159: 87
Euagoras 190: 117, n. 14

Livy
Praef. 5: 164

Lucian
De hist. conscrib.
16: 161

Lysias
II.1–2: 116, n. 8

Mimnermus
(*ap.* Aristot. *Rhet.*)
1406b12: 90

Pindar
Ol. I: 19–28, *passim*
I.30ff.: 90
I.35: 92
Pyth. XII,20: 86

Plato
Apology
21d7: 208
22c: 195
Cratylus
391b6: 168
391c2–7: 171, n. 10
Epistula VII:
326a5ff.: 206
342e2ff.: 194, n. 28
343c5–7: 194, n. 28
343d3ff.: 206
344b1ff.: 189
344c8–d2: 194, n. 28
Euthydemus
294d1–2: 173
Gorgias
448e3–4: 193
457e4–5: 198, n. 40

460a5ff.: 192
474a5–b1: 197
487a1–3: 192
488b7: 202
489b8–c1: 202
491b8: 202
499c7ff.: 201
499d1ff.: 202
502bff.: 95
507a–c: 189
516e: 140
518e–519a: 140
Laches
184e8–9: 197
Laws
700c–d: 89
719c: 97
863c1ff.: 196, n. 35
908c1ff.: 208
Menexenus
236e3–4: 116
Meno
71b3: 188
75d5–7: 192, n. 22
86eff.: 188
98e7–8: 205
99c4: 195, n. 30
99e6: 205
100a1–2: 206
Phaedo
82a10ff.: 177–178
Phaedrus
245a: 97
Politicus
293c5ff.: 207
Protagoras
312c5: 187
313c5–7: 179
316b3–4: 197, n. 36
316d7: 195
318a8–319a5: 187
319a10–320c1: 188
320c–322b: 176–178
320e5: 200, n. 44
321a1: 200, n. 44
321b6: 200, n. 44
321c9: 200, n. 44
322b6: 200, n. 44
322c2: 190
322d1–5: 179
323c5: 179
326a: 87
329c6–d1: 189
330b4–6: 189
331c4–d1: 194
333c6–9: 196, n. 34
333d9–334c2: 201
336b8–c2: 188, n. 14
337c1ff.: 202
338e–339a: 195
338e6–341d8: 194
341e8: 195, n. 31
345d7: 195
345d9–e2: 198
345e1: 195
347a3–4: 195, n. 31
349d2–8: 190
350c6–351b2: 201
351b2–3: 201, n. 46
351b7–c1: 201
351c1: 192, 201, 205
351c4–5: 203
351d2–7: 193
351e2–3: 203
352b2–c7: 193
352c8–d2: 190
352d1–2: 190, 193
352d2–3: 196
352d4–e2: 193
352e3: 182, 193
353a7–8: 196
353e1–2: 204
356c4ff.: 200
356d3: 200, n. 44
356e1–8: 200, n. 44
356e5ff.: 200
357a5–6: 200, n. 44
357a5–b4: 200
357b4: 196, 200, n. 44
357c6–e2: 196
358a1ff.: 202
358a3: 197
358b2–6: 204
359a2–3: 197, 198
360d: 171
360d4ff.: 198
360e2: 191
361b1–2: 173, 191, 205
361c4–5: 191
361d7–e6: 191
Republic
338a7: 198, n. 40
376cff.: 91ff.
405c2: 191, n. 21
494a4: 206
501d2: 172
517aff.: 206
564c: 137, n. 51
595aff.: 96ff.
Theaetetus
150cff.: 192
152a6: 169
152a8: 173, n. 16
158a6: 169
158e6: 169
160c7: 169
161c1–2: 168, n. 1
161c2–3: 169
162e1–2: 176
167a6–7: 171
167b1–3: 172, 187

Pliny
Nat. Hist. 35,64: 87

Plutarch
De audiendis poetis
14Eff.: 104–105
16Aff.: 105–106
17Fff.: 106–107
18A: 90
25Bff.: 109
25Eff.: 111
36D–E: 113
De glor. Athen.
347Aff.: 159
348C: 90
De virtute morali
440E: 189
Vita Periclis
VI.5–6: 141

IX.1: 141, 143
X.6: 141
XI.2: 141
XI.4: 142
XV.1: 142
XV.2: 140, 142, 143
XVI.6: 143
XXXII.3: 145
XXXIII,4–5: 120
XXXV.4: 143

ps. Plutarch
De musica 1142a: 89

Polybius
III.31, 12–13: 162

Protagoras
VS 80A1, 25: 188, n.14
VS 80B1: 168–175
VS 80B3: 178
VS 80B4: 174, 175
VS 80B10: 178

Solon
fr. 13 (W)
1–6: 10, 65
7–15: 10–11
16–32: 11–12
33–62: 12
63–70: 12–13
71–76: 13–14

Sophocles
Ajax
646ff.: 72
Electra
34: 45
37: 45
70: 45
256–257: 44
308–309: 44
338: 45
397: 44
520ff.: 42
582–583: 45
610–611: 44
650ff.: 45
767–768: 42
770–771: 42
946: 45
962–973: 45–46
997–998: 45
1005–1006: 45
1042: 45
1415: 44
1422: 45
Oedipus Tyrannus
300–462: 29–37
108–131: 33
124: 34
139–140: 34
228: 34
366–368: 36
413–414: 36
435–436: 35
457–460: 36–37
460–461: 32
568: 34
781: 35
821–822: 36

Stesimbrotus
FGrH 107F9: 175

Theognis
145–148: 17–18
197–208: 17
370: 86
595–590: 17

Thucydides
I.22: 117
I.140,4: 119
I.141,5: 124, 137, n. 51
I.142,5: 125
I.143.4: 119
I.143,5: 124, 125
II.20,4: 122
II.21, 2–3: 122
II.22,1: 127
II.22,2: 123
II.25–32: 119
II.35: 115–117
II.36,3: 127
II.36,4: 127
II.38,2: 127
II.40,2: 130
II.40,4–5: 131
II.42,2: 131
II.43,1: 125
II.44,3–4: 51
II.56–58: 132
II.59,1: 132
II.61,2: 132
II.63,1–2: 133
II.64,3: 133, 134
II.65,1–3: 136

Timocles
ap. Athen. VI.223b: 167

Timotheus
PMG 792: 89

Xenophon
Memorabilia
I.7,2: 86
II.36: 65
III.10, 1ff.: 87–88
Symposium
II.21: 86

ps.-Xenophon
('Old Oligarch')
I.2: 121
I.5: 130
I.17: 121, n. 24
II.1: 122
II.6: 128
II.14: 121
II.20: 130

SUPPLEMENTS TO MNEMOSYNE

EDITED BY J. M. BREMER, L. F. JANSSEN, H. PINKSTER
H. W. PLEKET, C. J. RUIJGH AND P. H. SCHRIJVERS

Recent volumes in the series:

141. CAMPBELL, M. *A Commentary on Apollonius Rhodius* Argonautica III 1-471. 1994. ISBN 90 04 10158 6
142. DEFOREST, M.M. *Apollonius'* Argonautica: *A Callimachean Epic.* 1994. ISBN 90 04 10017 2
143. WATSON, P.A. *Ancient Stepmothers.* Myth, Misogyny and Reality. 1995. ISBN 90 04 10176 4
144. SULLIVAN, S.D. *Psychological and Ethical Ideas.* What Early Greeks Say. 1995. ISBN 90 04 10185 3
145. CARGILL, J. *Athenian Settlements of the Fourth Century B.C.* 1995. ISBN 90 04 09991 3
146. PANAYOTAKIS, C. *Theatrum Arbitri.* Theatrical Elements in the *Satyrica* of Petronius. 1995. ISBN 90 04 10229 9
147. GARRISON, E.P. *Groaning Tears.* Ethical and Dramatic Aspects of Suicide in Greek Tragedy. 1995. 90 04 10241 8
148. OLSON, S.D. *Blood and Iron.* Stories and Storytelling in Homer's *Odyssey.* 1995. ISBN 90 04 10251 5
149. VINOGRADOV, J.G.& S.D. KRYŽICKIJ (eds.). *Olbia.* Eine altgriechische Stadt im Nordwestlichen Schwarzmeerraum. 1995. ISBN 90 04 09677 9
150. MAURER, K. *Interpolation in Thucydides.* 1995. ISBN 90 04 10300 7
151. HORSFALL, N. (ed.) *A Companion to the Study of Virgil.* 1995 ISBN 90 04 09559 4
152. KNIGHT, V.H. *The Renewal of Epic.* Responses to Homer in the *Argonautica* of Apollonius. 1995. ISBN 90 04 10386 4
153. LUSCHNIG, C.A.E. *The Gorgon's Severed Head.* Studies of *Alcestis, Electra,* and *Phoenissae.* 1995. ISBN 90 04 10382 1
154. NAVARRO ANTOLÍN, F. (ed.). *Lygdamus.* Corpus Tibullianum III. 1-6: Lygdami elegiarum liber. Translated by J.J. Zoltowski. 1996. ISBN 90 04 10210 8
155. MATTHEWS, V.J. *Antimachus of Colophon.* Text and Commentary. 1996. ISBN 90 04 10468 2
156. TREISTER, M.Y. *The Role of Metals in Ancient Greek History.* 1996. ISBN 90 04 10473 9
157. WORTHINGTON, I. (ed.). *Voice into Text.* Orality and Literacy in Ancient Greece. 1996. ISBN 90 04 10431 3
158. WIJSMAN, H.J.W. *Valerius Flaccus,* Argonautica, *Book V.* A Commentary. 1996. ISBN 90 04 10506 9
159. SCHMELING, G. (ed.). *The Novel in the Ancient World.* 1996. ISBN 90 04 09630 2
160. SICKING, C.M.J. & P. STORK. *Two Studies in the Semantics of the Verb in Classical Greek.* 1996. ISBN 90 04 10460 7
161. KOVACS, D. *Euripidea Altera.* 1996. ISBN 90 04 10624 3
162. GERA, D. *Warrior Women.* The Anonymous Tractatus *De Mulieribus.* 1997. ISBN 90 04 10665 0
163. MORRIS, I. & B. POWELL (eds.). *A New Companion to Homer.* 1997. ISBN 90 04 09989 1

164. ORLIN, E.M. *Temples, Religion and Politics in the Roman Republic.* 1997. ISBN 90 04 10708 8
165. ALBRECHT, M. VON. *A History of Roman Literature.* From Livius Andronicus to Boethius with Special Regard to Its Influence on World Literature. 2 Vols. Revised by G. Schmeling and by the Author. Vol. 1: Translated with the Assistance of F. and K. Newman, Vol. 2: Translated with the Assitance of R.R. Caston and F.R. Schwartz. 1997. ISBN 90 04 10709 6 (Vol. 1), ISBN 90 04 10711 8 (Vol. 2), ISBN 90 04 10712 6 (Set)
166. DIJK, J.G.M. VAN. Αἶνοι, Λόγοι, Μῦθοι. Fables in Contexts in Archaic, Classical, and Hellenistic Greek Literature. 1997. ISBN 90 04 10747 9
167. MAEHLER, H. (Hrsg.). *Die Lieder des Bakchylides.* Zweiter Teil: Die Dithyramben und Fragmente. Text, Übersetzung und Kommentar. 1997. ISBN 90 04 10671 5
168. DILTS, M. & G.A. KENNEDY (eds.). *Two Greek Rhetorical Treatises from the Roman Empire.* Introduction, Text, and Translation of the Arts of Rhetoric Attributed to Anonymous Seguerianus and to Apsines of Gadara. 1997. ISBN 90 04 10728 2
169. GÜNTHER, H.-C. *Quaestiones Propertianae.* 1997. ISBN 90 04 10793 2
170. HEINZE, T. (Hrsg.). *P. Ovidius Naso. Der* XII. *Heroidenbrief: Medea an Jason.* Einleitung, Text und Kommentar. Mit einer Beilage: Die Fragmente der Tragödie *Medea.* 1997. ISBN 90 04 10800 9
171. BAKKER, E.J. (ed.). *Grammar as Interpretation.* Greek Literature in its Linguistic Contexts. 1997. ISBN 90 04 10730 4
172. GRAINGER, J.D. *A Seleukid Prosopography and Gazetteer.* 1997. ISBN 90 04 10799 1
173. GERBER, D.E. (ed.). *A Companion to the Greek Lyric Poets.* 1997. ISBN 90 04 09944 1
174. SANDY, G. *The Greek World of Apuleius.* Apuleius and the Second Sophistic. 1997. ISBN 90 04 10821 1
175. ROSSUM-STEENBEEK, M. VAN. *Greek Readers' Digests?* Studies on a Selection of Subliterary Papyri. 1998. ISBN 90 04 10953 6
176. McMAHON, J.M. *Paralysin Cave.* Impotence, Perception, and Text in the *Satyrica* of Petronius. 1998. ISBN 90 04 10825 4
177. ISAAC, B. *The Near East under Roman Rule.* Selected Papers. 1998. ISBN 90 04 10736 3
178. KEEN, A.G. *Dynastic Lycia.* A Political History of the Lycians and Their Relations with Foreign Powers, c. 545-362 B.C. 1998. ISBN 90 04 10956 0
179. GEORGIADOU, A. & D.H.J. LARMOUR. *Lucian's Science Fiction Novel* True Histories. Interpretation and Commentary. 1998. ISBN 90 04 10667 7
180. GÜNTHER, H.-C. *Ein neuer metrischer Traktat und das Studium der pindarischen Metrik in der Philologie der Paläologenzeit.* 1998. ISBN 90 04 11008 9
181. HUNT, T.J. *A Textual History of Cicero's* Academici Libri. 1998. ISBN 90 04 10970 6
182. HAMEL, D. *Athenian Generals.* Military Authority in the Classical Period. 1998. ISBN 90 04 10900 5
183. WHITBY, M. (ed.). *The Propaganda of Power.* The Role of Panegyric in Late Antiquity. 1998. ISBN 90 04 10571 9
184. SCHRIER, O.J. *The* Poetics *of Aristotle and the* Tractatus Coislinianus. A Bibliography from about 900 till 1996. 1998. ISBN 90 04 11132 8
185. SICKING, C.M.J. *Distant Companions.* Selected Papers. 1998. ISBN 90 04 11054 2